

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Report

The Maryland Long Term Care Ombudsman Program serves nearly 50,000 people who live in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Forty local ombudsmen, augmented by volunteer ombudsmen, protect the rights and promote the well-being of residents by providing consumers with information about long-term care services, resolving complaints about specific problems experienced by residents and educating consumers and long-term care providers about residents' rights and good care practices.

In June 2010, Gloria Lawlah, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Aging, announced the selection of Alice Hedt as Maryland's State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Ms Hedt has more than 25 years experience in aging and long-term care and is a dynamic leader in the field. Secretary Lawlah expanded the staffing of the Program to include Robbyn McIntosh, who is serving as Ombudsman Program Specialist.

As of 2009 data reports, Maryland had 19 local ombudsman areas with 39 paid program staff (FTE.s) and 99 volunteers. It was, however, one of a few states in which none of the volunteers were certified.

By September of 2010, Ms Hedt set two goals to guide her work: 1) to ensure consistency within and between the 19 local programs, and 2) advocate on behalf of Maryland residents who live in long term care facilities. She designated 2010 as the year to reorganize the program to improve effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, and 2011 as the year to increase the size and scope of the volunteer program.

Since September 2010, major improvements in the Ombudsman program include:

- 1) Implementation of two groups, the Coordination Team, composed of ombudsmen, to address program details and the effect of decisions on the ombudsmen and AAAs, and a Stakeholder group having a broader perspective to discuss the effectiveness of the programs. Both groups have continued to meet regularly to monitor improvements.
- 2) Bimonthly training started Nov 4, 2010 to strengthen ombudsmen skills and share information between programs. A goal for 2011 is to have all ombudsman and volunteers certified. In 2010, the number of volunteers increased to 122.
- 3) Technical assistance to ombudsman –OmbudsManager 2.0, an updated software program to record and track activities and ensure consistent data collection throughout the state, was introduced. The statistical information is to be used as part of Continuous Quality Improvement. Training is completed and all ombudsman will be using the 2.0 by September 2011.

For further information, you may contact Phyllis Meyerson at:
phyllismeyerson@verizon.net”

