



State of New Jersey
Department of the Public Advocate



A Voice for the People



Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly

WHAT DOES THE OMBUDSMAN DO?

The Ombudsman's Office works to preserve the health, safety, welfare and protect the rights of New Jersey residents age 60 and older who live in long-term health care facilities. The program seeks to ensure that residents receive quality care as they age.

All services are free and confidential.

The Office of the Ombudsman's staff can answer questions, provide information and handle complaints about residents' rights and other areas of concern. We can also refer residents to other agencies or programs providing services to seniors.

The Ombudsman accepts complaints from any source and takes action as necessary to promote the health, safety, welfare and civil and human rights of elderly residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

The Ombudsman's Office can conduct public or private hearings, subpoena documents or personal testimony and has full unrestricted access to elderly residents of long-term care facilities and their records.



The Office of the Ombudsman also reviews proposals to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining medical treatment in end-of-life situations in long-term care.

The identity of the people involved in complaints and the nature of the complaints are kept confidential. Anonymous reports are accepted.

HOW DOES THE OMBUDSMAN RESOLVE PROBLEMS?

Dispute resolution is an important and essential function of the Ombudsman's Office. Prompt resolution of a complaint brings relief to the affected residents and provides assistance to the health care facilities in addressing the problems.

If a resident, family member or legal guardian of a resident has a problem or concern, the Ombudsman's Office investigates and makes efforts to resolve the issue. If we are unable to resolve a problem, we will refer it to an appropriate agency.

Complaints received by the Ombudsman's Office are assigned to a Field Investigator. The Investigator makes an unannounced visit to the facility and conducts a complete review of the facts, obtains records and interviews residents and staff.

When necessary, substantiated complaints are referred to the appropriate county prosecutor or state licensing agency.

Example of residents' concerns include:

- Violation of residents' rights or dignity
- Physical, verbal or mental abuse, deprivation of services necessary to maintain residents' physical and mental health or unreasonable confinement
- Poor quality of care, including inadequate personal hygiene and slow response to requests for assistance
- Improper transfer or discharge
- Inappropriate use of chemical or physical restraints
- Financial exploitation

Investigative priority is given to abuse complaints.

All Ombudsman case files are closed to the public.

If you would like facility license or annual survey information, please call the Department of Health and Senior Services, Division of Health Facilities, Evaluation and Licensing at 1-800-792-9770.

DOES THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE NEED VOLUNTEER HELP?

Absolutely!

If you are interested in becoming a Volunteer Advocate for residents 60 years of age and older, we can put you in touch with a volunteer coordinator in your community!

Call (609) 943-4022 for more information.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE OMBUDSMAN?

You can file a complaint via email, PublicAdvocate@advocate.state.nj.us

Call Toll Free: **1-877-582-6995** or write:

Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly
PO Box 852
Trenton, NJ 08625-0852



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