



CERTIFIED VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE PROGRAM

Overview

The New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) was created by statute to preserve and protect the health, safety, and welfare of adults living in New Jersey institutions and long-term health care facilities.

The Certified Volunteer Advocate Program (CVAP) enriches that mandate by allowing the LTCO to have a consistent, visible presence within the facilities. Certified Volunteer Advocates (CVAs) are trained and certified by the LTCO to provide on-site advocacy to residents and their family members. CVAs complement the investigative function of the LTCO by attempting to resolve day-to-day concerns with residents and facility administrative staff while referring serious complaints of abuse, neglect and exploitation to their Regional Manager for investigation.

More than 170 CVAs are assigned to nursing homes throughout the state. The goal of the program is to recruit volunteers to be placed in all 350 skilled nursing facilities throughout the state. CVAs report to their Regional Manager, Statewide Coordinator, and Director of Certified Volunteer Services. They are often called up to provide real-world feedback on conditions in nursing homes to the State Ombudsman and LTCO senior staff.

Mission Statement

The mission of the CVAP is to provide the best on-site advocacy to assist long-term care residents, their family members and facility staff by proactively resolving quality-of-care and quality-of-life issues.

Major Functions of CVAs:

- Maintain consistent, weekly presence in long-term care facilities.
- Respond to residents' concerns and complaints.
- Educate and inform residents, family members and staff about residents' rights and the LTCO's services.
- Empower residents to advocate on their own behalf by exercising their rights in specific ways.

CVA SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✓ Make regular weekly visits to their assigned long-term care facility to meet with residents.
- ✓ Educate residents and their family members about LTCO programs and residents' rights.
- ✓ Ensure that the LTCO Residents' monthly newsletter, The Beacon, is distributed.

- ✓ Work with residents to advance policies and legislation that support the rights of residents of nursing homes.
- ✓ Empower residents to advocate for themselves.
- ✓ Resolve quality-of-care and quality-of-life issues within the long-term care facility through the facility's assigned contact person.
- ✓ Collaborate with LTCO Field Investigators, Resident Experience Investigators, and Community Engagement staff.
- ✓ Make collaborative site visits, when asked, with LTCO Field Investigators, Resident Experience Investigators, and Community Engagement staff to review complaints or concerns.
- ✓ Follow LTCO's reporting and documentation procedures, which require that instances of possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation be reported to their Regional Manager and Central Office immediately.
- ✓ Maintain accurate records of problems/concerns reported.
- ✓ Complete and submit monthly activity reports to Regional Manager.
- ✓ Attend resident and family council meetings when invited and provide technical assistance to residents seeking to create more effective resident councils.
- ✓ Attend the annual survey conducted by the Department of Health. Discuss with survey team representatives any concerns or issues the CVA may have with the quality of care and document on activity log. Help residents convey their concerns to survey team.
- ✓ Attend quarterly in-service/educational meetings held by Regional Manager.

QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants must be:

- Eighteen (18) years of age or older and possess a valid New Jersey driver's license or have access to public transportation.
- Interested in promoting and protecting the rights of long-term care residents.
- Dependable, with good verbal skills, including active listening skills.
- Free from conflict of interest. (See Mission Statement/Conflict of Interest Form.)
- Not habitual users of controlled dangerous substances.
- Individuals who have never been convicted of a felony or pleaded guilty to an indictment, information, or complaint alleging violation of a federal or state law.

TIME COMMITMENT

Attend a thirty-six (36) hour live, online interactive training class; pass a certification exam that will be incorporated in the training; shadow a seasoned CVA to experience fieldwork; attend quarterly regional meetings; and visit an assigned facility for a minimum of four hours per week.

SUPERVISION

CVAs are directly supervised by a Regional Manager and the Statewide Coordinator, in conjunction with the Director of Certified Volunteer Services, who is responsible for overall supervision of the CVAP.

NOTE:

- CVAs are advised not to administer food or liquids to residents, including, but not limited to, water, ice, alcohol, hot or cold beverages.
- CVAs are not permitted to dispense medications, including over-the-counter drugs.
- CVAs are not permitted to give direct care to the residents of the facility, including, but not limited to, changing clothes, performing body checks, lifting or turning (repositioning), pushing a wheelchair, or assisting with feeding or toileting a resident.
- CVAs will not be assigned to facilities where they could be perceived as having a potential conflict of interest.