Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Libby Anderson, Program Director
Shelley Woolery and Barbara Najman, Field Services Managers
Advocacy & Protection

- HICAP
  - Health insurance counseling and advocacy program for Medicare
- Financial Abuse Specialist Team
  - Community education and resources to help identify financial exploitation, criminal fraud, and caregiver abuse for your loved ones
- Long Term Care Ombudsman
  - Advocates for the rights of seniors and disabled adults in skilled nursing and residential care facilities

Prevention & Wellness

- ReConnect (EIOSA)
  - Reintegrates isolated adults back into the community, incorporating healthy and meaningful activities back into their lives
- Friendly Visitor
  - Provides companionship and social support to isolated, frail adults

Education & Outreach

- SmileMakers
  - Holiday program supporting seniors without families living in skilled nursing and residential care facilities
- Answers Guide
  - Premiere resource guide for housing, caregiving, healthcare resources and Medicare comparison charts

A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization
Mission

• Promote Adult Empowerment

• Prevent Abuse

• Advocate for the Rights and Dignity for those Experiencing Health & Aging Challenges
History

- In 1976, the COA acquired the newly legislated State & Federally mandated Long-Term Care Ombudsman Service, “Federal Older Americans Act” & State AB2997
Program Development

• Due to the large increase in the number of cases of elder abuse and neglect, the US government, under then-President Nixon, requested that the states develop programs to investigate and respond to complaints made by or on behalf of individuals in nursing homes.
Program Development

- The Older Americans Act raised the program to the statutory level & required all state Agencies on Aging to establish an Ombudsman Program
- 1975 Calif. LTCOP
- 1979 Welfare & Institution Code guaranteed Ombudsmen the right to enter facilities
LTC Ombudsman in Orange County

- 28,000 Orange County residents live in long-term care facilities
- There are 1,000 Nursing & Residential Care Facilities in Orange County, consisting of 6-beds, large assisted living and skilled nursing facilities
LTC Ombudsman in Orange County

- Ombudsmen create a presence by making unannounced visits, by monitoring conditions & care, by investigating allegations of abuse and neglect, and by referring matters when appropriate to other agencies.

- Ombudsmen seek to empower residents and to provide a voice for those who are unable to speak.
Elder Abuse

- **Investigate** complaints and allegations of abuse and/or neglect

- **Report** to Law Enforcement and Licensing Agencies

- **Prevent** through education
Program Scope

- 35 state subprograms in California
- Serving residents 60 years and older
- RCFE
- SNF
- Those 18-59 years in ARF
LTC Ombudsman Training

• Trainees are interviewed to ensure there are no conflicts, that the trainees understand the time commitment and to verify that the Program is a fit for them

• Trainees are paired with certified Ombudsmen to tour each type of facility
LTC Ombudsman Training

- Trainees undergo a 36-hour classroom training.
- Trainees spend ten hours in the field, post-training.
LTC Ombudsman Training

Topics emphasized:

• Ombudsmen are resident-centered

• Ombudsmen advocate for resident rights

• Ombudsmen make reports of Complaints and Concerns
LTC Ombudsman Training

Topics emphasized:

• Ombudsmen witness Advance Health Care Directives in Skilled Nursing Facilities

• Ombudsmen attend Resident Council Meetings, Family Council Meetings and Patient Care Planning Meetings, on request
Facility Visits

- Upon certification, an Ombudsman is assigned his or her own facilities to cover.

- Number of visits, on average:
  - Six-bed facilities: once per month
  - Large assisted living facility: twice per month
Facility Visits

- Skilled nursing facility – once per week
- Visits are more often if a concern or a complaint is received
Case Referrals

- Communication from a resident, family member or friend
- Reports from a facility or facility personnel
- Reports from Adult Protective Services
- Reports from financial institutions
- CrisisLine referrals from the California State Ombudsman
Complaints & Concerns

• Ombudsman must obtain CONSENT from the resident to proceed to investigate

• If consent is obtained, the Ombudsman will investigate the allegations

• If appropriate, the Ombudsman will refer a matter to licensing agencies or law enforcement
Ombudsman Rules of Conduct

• Maintain confidentiality

• Remember our role is resident-driven

• Be mindful of conflicts of interest

• Respect and promote a resident’s right to self-determination
Ombudsman Rules of Conduct

• Act to protect vulnerable individuals from abuse and neglect

• Provide services with respect for human dignity, unrestricted by age, social/economic status, personal characteristics or lifestyle choices.
Continuing Education

- Monthly In-Services
- Monthly Regional Meetings
- Webinars
Resources

• CA Dept. of Public Health, Licensing and Certification (enforces skilled nursing facility regulations) 714-567-2906, fax 714-567-2815

• CA Dept. of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division (enforces residential care facility regulations) 714-703-2840, fax 714-703-2868

• Local Ombudsman Office 1-800-300-6222

• Ombudsman Crisis Line 1-800-231-4024
Council on Aging
Southern California
Helping Seniors Remain Healthy, Connected & Protected