

The Senior Snippet

Written by Erin LeBlanc

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (Ombudsman Program) assists residents of licensed long-term care facilities in protecting their health, safety, welfare and rights.

In Colorado, long-term care ombudsmen are advocates for residents of nursing homes, assisted living residences and similar licensed adult long-term care facilities. They work to resolve individual resident issues and to bring about changes at the local, state and national level to improve long-term care.

While most residents receive good care in long-term care facilities, far too many are neglected and others are victims of psychological, physical and other kinds of abuse. Trained ombudsmen, paid and volunteer, regularly visit long-term care facilities, monitor conditions and care, and provide a voice for those unable to speak for themselves.

Mandated by the Federal Older Americans Act, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program protects and promotes the rights and quality of life for people who reside in nursing homes. Ombudsmen have a hands-on working relationship with the residents and staff of the facilities in their areas and inform nursing home residents and their families of their rights. The nursing home ombudsmen program is available to all current residents and prospective residents.

As an Ombudsman, we attend resident council meetings, which occur once a month. We also make unannounced visits throughout the month visiting with residents and staff and providing education and training.

During resident council meetings, we remind residents they have rights, resident rights that are federally supported.

We also attend community meetings to educate and discuss resident rights, so those that might have a loved one in a long-term care community are aware.

This monthly article will provide readers with a resident right and the details of that right.

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Residents have the right to consideration, privacy and dignity.

Residents have the right to be treated with respect and to be addressed in the manner of your choice (i.e., Dr. Jones, Mrs. Smith, Jane, etc.).

Residents have the right to be respectfully spoken to, while making eye contact. Residents' dignity can be preserved when they are treated like adults, not children—remember to knock before entering their personal space.

The expectation of privacy shouldn't have to change just because a person is now living in a care community. That includes:

—during appointments with medical professionals.

—when receiving personal care.

—using the bathroom.

—making and receiving phone calls.

—entertaining visitors.

—and if one just needs time alone.

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