



Caring for Family & Friends Resources

What is the role of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman during COVID-19?

During this pandemic, Long-Term Care Ombudsman representatives are prevented from entering long-term care facilities. Despite this, they continue to provide advocacy and complaint resolution services for residents of skilled nursing facilities and residential care facilities for the elderly, like assisted living or board and care homes.

In place of in-person contact, the Ombudsman representatives are engaged in the following activities.

1. Ombudsman representatives are contacting facilities frequently and regularly:
 - a) They are asking facilities to report what their plans are for facilitating residents' contact with families and friends.
 - b) They are asking facilities what resources they need to facilitate residents' contact with friends and family.
 - c) They are requesting the facility census and getting the contact information for each resident's representative.
 - d) The State Office is developing a set of check-in questions that local Ombudsman programs can use when calling facilities.
2. Ombudsman representatives are reaching out to residents by phone, e-mail and video meetings.
 - a) They are encouraging families to contact Ombudsman representatives by these means as well.
 - b) They are reaching out to facilities to ask what they need and what their plans are for facilitating residents' contact with families and friends.
 - c) Ombudsman representatives are working closely with facility staff to facilitate communication with residents.
 - d) Ombudsman representatives are contacting the resident and family council leadership at facilities.
3. The State Office has created 8 ½ x 11 mini-Ombudsman posters that local Ombudsman program can customize with their local program's information.
 - a) Local Ombudsman programs have asked facilities to post the poster on or near the front door of the facility.
 - b) The poster will advise families or friends who come to the facility on how to contact the local Ombudsman program or the statewide CRISISline. The posters are bilingual in English and Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese.
4. The Ombudsman will advise residents who need an Advance Health Care Directive to either request a Physician's Order for Life Sustaining Treatment or, pursuant to Probate Code 4711, verbally nominate a surrogate decision maker.
 - a) Facility staff will need to document this in the resident's medical record which can remain in effect for 60 days.



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- b) The State Office has developed instructions and a form that residents can use to document their oral nomination.
5. Some families want to remove their loved ones from facilities and bring them home. The State Office is developing a list of things families should consider before moving a loved one.
6. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program suggests that families:
 - a) Find out what steps the facility is taking to keep residents safe.
 - b) Ask how the facility will provide updates on their loved one and whom they should contact if they have questions.
 - c) Request the facility set up a schedule for when they can connect with their loved one by phone, video, "window visiting," or other method.
 - d) Ask the administrator to seek permission from the family of other residents to share their email addresses with each other so families can create a group email and use it to communicate with other family members, bring questions and concerns to the facility or the Ombudsman program, or provide support to one another.