

Lower Savannah Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Serving Aiken,
Allendale,
Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun,
and Orangeburg Counties

Inside this issue:

Resident Advocacy and the LTC Ombudsman	2
Social Media and LTC	2
Fall Festivities	2
Resident Complaints	3
Resident Stories	3
Person Centered Care	3

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Residents Rights Month October 2017, It's All About Me!

Every year in October, National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, a long-term care resident advocacy group, hosts Resident's Rights Month.

Throughout the month, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, other long-term care facilities, family members, and advocates are encouraged to

participate in activities that promote resident's rights. This year's theme, **It's All About Me: My Life, My Care, My Choices**, was chosen to emphasize the importance of respecting and maintaining the dignity of every resident by allowing them to have a say in the care they receive. By listening to residents' voices, we honor their lives and experiences as well as treat them with the dignity

and respect they deserve. When residents feel as though they have a say in their care and everyday lives, their relationship with the long-term care facility and



their quality of care and quality of life are greatly improved.

You can help celebrate Resident's Rights Month by engaging residents, family members, and staff in activities that promote resident's rights, such as Residents' Rights Crossword Puzzles, holding a talent show, or speaking with residents about what quality care and quality of life mean

to them. You can even book your ombudsman to come in and play a game of Resident's Rights B-I-N-G-O.

Please let your residents and resident family members

know that the Lower Savannah Ombudsman Program will be hosting an Open Door Forum at Lower Savannah Council of Governments on Thursday, October 26, 2017 from 4:30pm to 7:00pm. The Office can be found out 2748

Wagener Road, Aiken SC 29801. This forum is a great opportunity to learn more about residents rights and what ombudsmen do for residents of long-term care facilities. To register, please call Susan Garen at 803-508-7056 or email at shgaren@lscog.org.

A second forum will be held in Orangeburg County at a later date.

Resident Rights: Spotlight on Visitation

Residents have a right to visit with whomever they want whenever they want, as long as that visit does not negatively impact the lives of the other residents in the facility. For instance, if a resident has a visitor during the day who is loud and

disruptive and refuses to calm down after multiple attempts by staff, they can be asked to leave. However, if a resident chooses to have someone over at one o'clock in the morning and is not disturbing the other residents, that visitor should be allowed to

meet with the resident. Residents also reserve the right to refuse to visit with individuals; that includes family members, friends, and medical personnel.

Resident Advocacy and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

The word “ombudsman” is a Swedish term that means citizen representative. That in turn means that a Long-Term Care Ombudsman represents citizens of long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes and community residential care facilities. The role of the long-term care ombudsman is to advocate for the rights of residents living in these facilities. Ombudsmen advocate for residents by ensuring that their rights are



not being violated. This advocacy can be completed in a variety of ways, such as attending a care plan meeting at the request of a resident and/or family member to ensure that questions they have about the care the resident is receiving are being addressed by the facility. Long-Term Care Ombudsmen also have the authority to investigate complaints made by or on behalf of the

residents. Throughout the investigation, the ombudsman will review facility documents and interview residents, family members, and facility staff. If they are unable to verify the complaint, the ombudsman will still advocate for the residents of the facility by making recommendations to facility staff suggesting ways in which to possibly avoid similar complaints in the future. Ombudsmen also conduct routine visits and are available to provide training to facility staff, residents, family members, and the public on residents’ rights and abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

For more information on Residents Rights Month 2017 go to: <http://theconsumervoice.org/events/residents-rights-month-2017>

Social Media and Residents of Long-Term Care Facilities

With the introduction of social media accounts like Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat, a new threat to resident privacy has been created. In recent years, stories of staff members posting videos of residents displaying “problem behaviors” or staff making inappropriate statements to residents to see what their reactions will be have circulated the internet. And

while these two examples are flagrant in their violation of a resident’s right to privacy, there are more subtle violations of this right as well. For instance, many facilities have social media accounts where they post pictures of activities conducted with their residents, or staff members want to post a nice picture of themselves with a favorite resident. It is important to

keep in mind that these are violations of their privacy if the resident or their representative have not given consent. Make sure all staff is aware of social media policies and the facility has written consent from residents or their responsible party before posting anything on social media.

Fall Festivities

There are many activities that facilities can participate in during the Fall months to promote resident engagement and quality of life. Take residents to a pumpkin patch, have them create fall reefs to hang in their rooms or give to family members, or even host a costume competition for Halloween. Be sure to post pictures in common areas

where residents and family members can easily see them and reminisce on all the fun that was had. Engaging residents in fun activities keeps them



happy, healthy, and active. It is also a good way to promote your facility to potential families; no one wants their loved one to go to a facility where it seems as though the residents are not engaged and enjoying themselves.

Resident Complaints: Call Lights

During routine visits, ombudsmen make it a point to ask residents if they have concerns about their care or any other complaints. It is not done in an attempt to catch facilities or staff members in bad practices, but rather as a method to catch concerns residents may have before they escalate to the point of needing to file a formal complaint with the ombudsman office.

One of the main complaints the Lower Savannah Ombudsman Program encountered during routine visits in the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year was the complaint that

call lights were not being answered in a timely manner. One resident reported pressing the call light and having to wait nearly thirty minutes before someone entered his room to assist him with toileting needs, and by that time he had already soiled himself. While staff members of long-term care facilities are busy, a resident should never have to wait so long for their call light to be answered. Even if staff is unable to assist them at that time, someone should respond to the call light

to ensure that the resident is not in need of immediate assistance due to a fall or some other emergency. The fact that a resident is not on someone's assignment is not a valid excuse to ignore a call light. Staff members are part of a team, and as such they are all responsible for ensuring that the residents are safe and their needs are met in a timely and effective manner.



*Long-Term Care
Ombudsman Open Door
Forum to be held on
October 26, 2017 in
Aiken County. Contact
your ombudsmen for
more information!*

Resident Stories: It May Not Be What You Think It Is

Mrs. Jones had been living in the nursing home for years. She was paralyzed from the neck down, but she still had all of her mental capabilities and was able to dictate to staff the type of care she wanted. One day, Mrs. Jones woke from her nap and used her chin to press her call light to tell her CNA she needed to brush her teeth before heading to dinner. However,

when the CNA got to her she was told that she'd already had dinner. When she saw that it was 9pm, she insisted that she had not eaten and asked that she be brought one of the sandwiches she knew was kept on the unit. A few days later, she yelled at staff for allowing spiders to crawl all over her and only got angrier when they insisted no spiders were present. Her

confusion and hallucinations worsened over the next few days and she also began to show signs of hearing loss. For weeks, staff assumed that she had dementia. It wasn't until she was sent out to be evaluated for her hearing loss that it was revealed she had an ear infection, which had been causing all of her symptoms.

Person Centered Care

The powers that be who regulate long-term care facilities state that staff should engage in person centered care, but what exactly does person centered care look like? Put simply, person centered care is making reasonable



accommodations in the care provided to residents to ensure that care is both sufficient enough to keep a resident's health from deteriorating while also taking the resident's wishes into consideration. This can be as simple as making sure a resident has a glass of water beside her bed each night before she goes to

sleep or having third shift get a resident dressed and out of bed by six o'clock every morning if he has always been an early riser. Person centered care is finding a way to provide residents with quality care in a manner that will not cause them undo distress or impede their quality of life or their right to make decisions for themselves.

LOWER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS-
AREA AGENCY ON AGING

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A Message from Your Ombudsmen:

As the holiday season approaches, we would like to thank you and your staff for all that you do to care for one of the most vulnerable populations. This time of year can be hard for residents of long-term care facilities, especially those who are new to the facility or do not have many, or any, visitors. In the coming months, we look forward to seeing and hearing about how you celebrate the holidays with your residents to make them feel valued as part of a larger community.

Best Wishes,
Susan and Dana



Volunteer Ombudsman Program

The Volunteer Ombudsman Program is an extension of the Long-Term Ombudsman Program providing companionship, interaction and education about



Ombudsman staff and Volunteer Ombudsmen at the Lower Savannah 2017 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

residents' rights through routine visits with residents in their assigned facility. If a

facility does not have an assigned volunteer, then Ombudsman Staff will conduct routine visits on a quarterly basis.

Volunteer Ombudsmen do not conduct complaint investigations, but they are able to help resolve simple issues they may come across in facilities such as informing facility staff of a resident who is heavily soiled

or talking with residents about ways in which they may be able to advocate for themselves. If the volunteer comes across a situation she is not able to address, she can contact the Ombudsman staff who can then open up a formal complaint

case if they receive permission to do so from the resident, or the responsible party if the resident is unable to give consent.

The Lower Savannah Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program currently has four volunteers: Bernice Deloach (We Care Residential in Aiken, SC), Aura Main (Hitchcock Place in Aiken, SC), Hope Long Weldon (PruittHealth - Bamberg in Bamberg, SC), and Beverley Zigelman (Trinity on Laurens in Aiken, SC).

If you know someone you think would be a great Volunteer Ombudsman, contact Susan Garen or Dana Daniel at 803-649-7981.