Accomplishments from the State Ombudsman, Jim Crochet

Jim Crochet was appointed as the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman on May 2, 2011. In the span of one short year, there has been a major paradigm shift by Ombudsman Program staff and volunteers throughout the state, which has resulted in many program accomplishments. Much appreciation is extended to program staff and volunteers who have first and foremost as their mission, the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents living in long-term care settings in Florida. Below is a list of the accomplishments of the program, which took place under Jim Crochet’s leadership over the course of the past year.

1) The number of volunteers increased from 242 in May 2011 to over 300 in May 2012—an increase of 24 percent. The number of volunteers has remained steady with continued recruitment efforts in place. Recruitment was designated as one of the number one priorities of the State Ombudsman.

2) The State Ombudsman created the first full-time recruitment manager position. The State Ombudsman charged the recruitment manager with the responsibility of increasing the statewide volunteer rate from one volunteer for every 600 residents to one volunteer for every 500 residents—a 25 percent increase. Listed below are some of the efforts aimed at recruitment of ombudsman volunteers:

a) The Ombudsman Program sends monthly recruitment letters to retired state employees.

b) The recruitment manager has formed relationships with various universities throughout the state for undergraduate and graduate students to become ombudsmen as part of their internships. The purpose is to complete over 4,000 administrative assessments (one for each nursing home, assisted living facility, and adult family-care home) in order to meet Florida’s unique statutory requirement of visiting each long-term care facility at least once a year.

The student volunteer strategy is threefold:

1. It is intended to free up time for the more experienced ombudsmen to perform complaint investigations on behalf of residents. These investigations are more involved and focused on problem solving.

Ombudsman Program staff recognize the hard work of the Panhandle Council ombudsmen during National Volunteer Week. (L-R) Alan Tudor, Janice Harvey, Dr. Patricia Born

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2. It provides required internships for students in Florida’s universities.

3. It advances an intergenerational initiative where older ombudsmen interact with student ombudsmen, enhancing an exchange of ideas and an increase in learning.

3) The program has made a paradigm shift from a regulatory focus toward a resident-centered advocacy focus.

4) A spirit of cooperation has resulted in the development of mutual respect between ombudsmen and providers. The State Ombudsman has worked with industry representatives to better the quality of life and care of residents by reaching out in a collaborative effort. Ombudsmen will first and foremost, advocate on behalf of the resident.

5) The State Ombudsman developed the position of Director of Field Operations in order to efficiently and consistently advocate for residents. This position supervises three regional managers and 16 district managers covering 17 districts and 18 local volunteer councils, consisting of over 300 volunteer ombudsmen.

6) The program’s training staff developed the first comprehensive online ombudsman certification training in the nation, at the direction of the State Ombudsman. The State Ombudsman presented an overview of the training at the April 2012 National Association of State Ombudsman Programs Conference. There was such interest in the online training that the State Ombudsman agreed to work with the National Ombudsman Resource Center to share this training nationwide.

7) The program’s training staff developed the first comprehensive online continuing education training modules to meet the continuing education requirements, at the direction of the State Ombudsman.

8) The State Ombudsman, in consultation with program staff, developed a resident-centered administrative assessment/visitation form, in contrast to the previous regulatory form, in order to be in compliance with the Older Americans Act.

9) The State Ombudsman developed a centralized program organization by standardizing processes and developing administrative memorandum for efficient and consistent operations among the regions and districts.

10) The State Ombudsman developed positive working

http://ombudsman.myflorida.com

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Summary of Top Complaints: Spring Quarter

Under State law, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is responsible for publishing its complaint data each quarter. The following data reflects verified complaints from cases closed between March 1, 2012 - May 31, 2012. The data also shows the number of these complaints resolved.

14 complaints
93% resolved
Horizon Bay Vibrant Retirement Living (ALF) - Port St. Lucie
(examples: personal property; shortage of staff)

8 complaints
100% resolved-->(great job!)
Highlands Village (ALF) - Sebring
(examples: privacy; access to own records)

8 complaints
100% resolved-->(great job!)
Change of Pace Ret Center (ALF) - Ocala
(examples: choice of activities; cleanliness)

7 complaints
100% resolved-->(great job!)
Broxton’s ACLF (ALF) - Caryville
(examples: exercise preference; privacy)

6 complaints
0% resolved
Horizon Bay Vibrant Retirement Living (ALF) - Sarasota
(examples: cleanliness; dignity/respect)

10 complaints
70% resolved
Howthorne Health and Rehab. (nursing home) - Ocala
(examples: discharge/eviction; lost laundry)

8 complaints
100% resolved-->(great job!)
East Bay Rehab. Center (nursing home) - Clearwater
(examples: billing/charges; dignity/respect )

6 complaints
100% resolved-->(great job!)
Manor on the Green (nursing home) - Daytona Beach
(examples: discharge/eviction; infection control)

5 complaints
100% resolved-->(great job!)
Gainesville Health Care Center (nursing home) - Gainesville
(examples: shortage of staff; personal funds)

4 complaints
100% resolved-->(great job!)
Consulate Health Care (nursing home) - Tallahassee
(examples: menu; privacy; dignity/respect)

Complaint Data Terms:

Verified: It is determined after work (interviews, record inspection, observation, etc.), that the circumstances described in the complaint are generally accurate.

Not Verified: It is determined after work (interviews, record inspection, observation, etc.), that the circumstances described in the complaint are not generally accurate. Verification is determined by the ombudsman.

Resolved: The complaint was addressed to the satisfaction of the resident. Resolved is one of several disposition codes used by the program. Resolution is determined by the resident.

To find out more about the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program's complaint or facility assessment data, call toll-free 1-888-831-0404 and ask to be transferred to a representative in your area. All services are free and confidential.
relationships with the state survey agency, Adult Protective Services, Office of the Attorney General, community resources, other departmental staff, and service providers. There currently exists a spirit of cooperation, trust, and inclusion in the circle of entities advocating and caring for residents.

11) The State Ombudsman is seeking legislative support for a pilot project to work with providers of assisted living facilities with limited mental health residents in an effort to increase the quality of life and care for those residents.

12) The State Ombudsman served as a member of the Governor’s Assisted Living Facility Task Force, which developed recommendations for legislative changes over assisted living facility regulation.

13) The State Ombudsman pioneered electronic filing at the program’s headquarters and plans to initiate the process statewide beginning July 1, 2012. This is intended to reduce the cost of paper, filing cabinets, and valuable space over a period of time.

14) The State Ombudsman will provide formal training to ombudsman staff by the Pioneer Network regarding culture change in long-term care facilities by working with the Department of Elder Affairs.

15) The State Ombudsman arranged for all regional and district managers to receive Volunteer Manager Certification Training.

FROM OUR LEGAL ADVOCATE, AUBREY POSEY

Facility Emergency Management Plan—What Ombudsmen Need to Know

As Florida gears up for the 2012 Hurricane Season, residents of long-term care facilities, staff members, community members, ombudsmen, and concerned family members need to be familiar with a facility’s emergency plan.

Under federal law, nursing homes must have evacuation plans in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The nursing home is required to “tailor its disaster plan to its geographic location and the types of residents it serves.” It must also review the evacuation plan, train new employees in emergency procedures and hold drills and periodic reviews with staff. The plan components must include: emergency evacuation transportation; adequate sheltering arrangements; post-disaster activities, including emergency power, food, and water; post-disaster transportation; supplies; staffing; emergency equipment; individual identification of residents and transfer of records; and responding to family inquiries. A nursing home’s plan is the responsibility of the administrator, in consultation with the county emergency management agency.

Assisted living facilities (ALFs) are also required to develop emergency plans that include providing care in the facility or evacuating the residents. Each plan should address all types of emergencies, not just hurricanes, and must be submitted to the county emergency management agency for approval. The ALF must review its plan annually and resubmit any substantive changes.
to the county agency. Staff members must receive one hour of training in the facility’s emergency procedures within 30 days of employment.

A nursing home must maintain a one-week supply of a variety of non-perishable food and supplies, representing a good diet. An ALF must have a three-day emergency food supply available for residents and sufficient water for drinking and food preparation or have a plan in place to obtain an adequate supply of water. Both nursing home and ALF plans must specifically address the needs of the residents the facility provides care for and should not be generic in nature. A guideline to developing an emergency management plan is available at: http://ahca.myflorida.com/MCHQ/Long_Term_Care/Assisted_living/pdf/alfempcriteria.pdf.

Regardless of your role in assuring quality care for residents, you should think about a facility’s emergency plan. Ask residents and their family members whether they know what they would do in the event of a disaster. Review the facility’s plan, and ask questions of the administrator and staff when a particular element does not seem workable in a disaster. For example, a contract for water may be workable in the event of a localized disaster affecting a small geographic range, but ask yourself, in the event of a Category 5 hurricane that wipes out a swath of homes, would a contract with a water company be sufficient?

Probably not.

Residents, family members, friends, ombudsmen, and other facility staff members should encourage the facility administration to think about what the plan looks like for small disasters and for large-scale disasters, and remind administration to be prepared for both!
An ombudsman is a volunteer who helps to improve the lives of people who live in long-term care settings like nursing homes, assisted living facilities and adult family-care homes. As members of Florida’s elder population make the transition into long-term care facilities, a strong support system for each individual becomes critical. Unfortunately, many long-term care residents do not have anyone to look out for their best interests when it comes to personal health, safety, welfare and rights.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is made up of more than 300 volunteers who are passionate about improving the quality of life for residents. It takes a special kind of person to commit to such a mission. We are proud to be a unique program whose success depends on the boldness and compassion of volunteers. These special individuals dedicate thousands of unpaid hours each year to ensuring that the voices of Florida’s long-term care facility residents are heard.

To learn more about how the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program can help you or someone you know, call us toll-free at 1-888-831-0404 or visit us online at http://ombudsman.myflorida.com. All services are free and confidential.