

# ADVOCATE

*Colorado Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program*

## 2021 Annual Report

### Overview and Highlights

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a nationwide program established approximately 50 years ago. The mission of the ombudsman program is to protect and promote the rights of residents living in long-term care. In Colorado, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has authority to visit and advocate for residents living in licensed nursing homes and assisted living residences.



4,356

Complaints Investigated



5,652

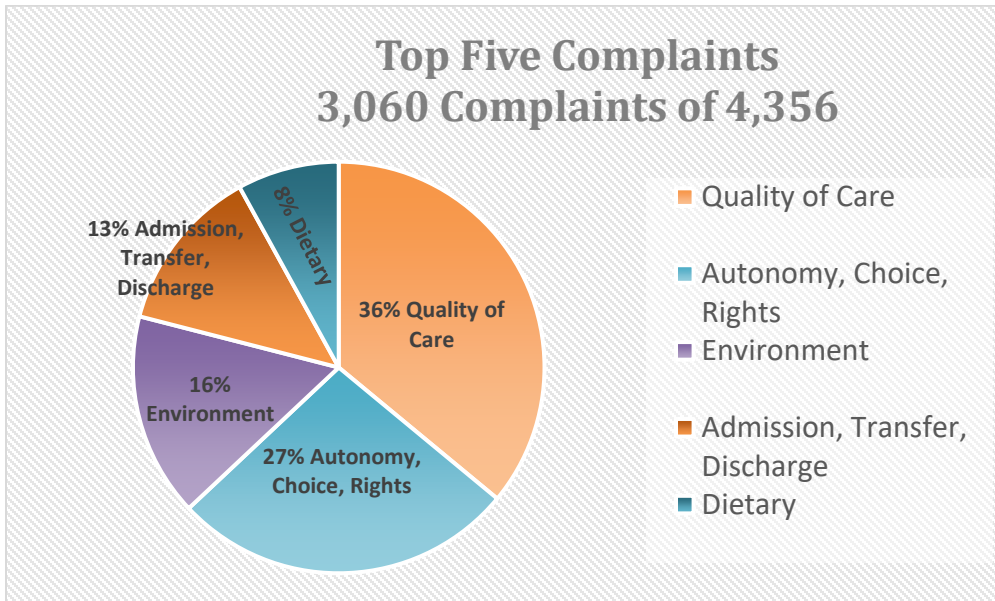
Consultations to Facility Staff



6,882

Consultations to Residents and Families

Ombudsmen assist residents of licensed long-term care facilities to resolve problems in situations involving quality of care, use of chemical or physical restraints, transfer and discharge, abuse, and other aspects of resident rights. As resident-directed advocates, ombudsmen work to resolve concerns expressed by the residents. Ombudsmen also provide consultation to residents in order to empower residents to advocate on their own behalf.



<b>1,097 (36%)</b> Quality of care, including slow response to call lights, medication management, and lack of care to residents' personal hygiene.
<b>821 (27%)</b> Autonomy, choice, and rights. Specifically, dignity and respect, visitation, and privacy.
<b>487 (16%)</b> The environment, including housekeeping.
<b>397 (13%)</b> Admission, transfer and discharges.
<b>258 (8%)</b> Food temperature, choice, variety, and quality.

### **Systemic Advocacy and Community Engagement**

Ombudsmen engage in systemic advocacy. The state-wide ombudsmen advocate for legislation to protect resident rights, participation in local, regional and state committees, provide educational programs to the community, and attend community meetings. During the 2021 legislative session, the program educated legislators about the importance of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. In late 2021, the State Ombudsman focused on proposed bills for the 2022 legislative session that would increase education requirements for staff who work in memory care and add appeal rights regarding involuntary discharges for residents who live in assisted living homes. The pandemic has created some challenges for in-person participation in these areas. However, ombudsmen have shown presence in various venues across the state of Colorado. Ombudsmen spent 891 hours during 2021 providing systemic advocacy through education to the long term care community.

Here are a few examples that demonstrate some of this work.

### **Boulder County Local Ombudsman (Marshall Fires, December 30, 2021)**

The Marshall fires in December impacted a large area in Boulder County. Fortunately, all residents living in long-term care facilities evacuated safely and were not injured by the fires. Regional Ombudsman, Erica Corson, coordinated the local ombudsman team to ensure follow up with residents after evacuation and upon returning to their homes. Erica also worked with other local ombudsmen to coordinate follow up visits with the Boulder residents who were relocated to other facilities outside of Boulder. Federal regulations require nursing homes to have evacuation plans in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The role of the ombudsman is to participate in emergency planning committees and speak on behalf of the residents. Ombudsmen also discuss the importance of residents' rights being protected during and after the emergency. Consumer Voice, a national advocacy organization for long-term care consumers, invited Erica to share her experience with the nationwide network of long-term care ombudsmen. Erica presented a training alongside the National Ombudsman and other State Ombudsmen to highlight the importance of the role of the ombudsman regarding emergency preparedness.

### **Larimer and Weld County Collaboration on Residents' Rights Month October 2021**

October marks the National Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month, a time to honor residents living in all long-term care facilities and to celebrate awareness of dignity, respect, and the value of each individual resident. The theme for 2021 was "Reclaiming My Rights, My Home, My Life," highlighting the need for residents' rights to be recognized, recovered, and reasserted. It emphasizes the recognition of the long-term care facility as the residents' home, and the importance of residents reclaiming their own lives.





Each year, ombudsmen provide systemic advocacy through education and raising awareness of federally mandated residents' rights while also underscoring the need for dignity, choice, and self-determination of all residents. The law also requires nursing homes to "promote and protect the rights of each resident." Residents' Rights Month is a time to raise awareness of these rights and celebrate residents. In 2021, Larimer and Weld County Ombudsman Programs collaborated with a Residents' Rights Art Contest. Residents submitted their artwork and the Larimer County Office on Aging Advisory Council, who voted on the submissions, chose the artwork that best exemplified the theme. The resident noted, "It is a rendition of the Colorado State bird, the Lark Bunting. I used a drawing of the father bird being a good father by his nursing his babies. I hope you enjoy it." The resident's artwork was proudly displayed on yard signs in front of long-term care facilities with information about Residents' Rights month for all to see.

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