

## Georgia Department of Human Resources

# OFFICE OF THE STATE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN

“Ombudsman” is a Swedish word meaning “citizen representative.” A Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) is a specialized ombudsman who works to resolve problems of and advocates for long-term care facility residents. In Georgia, the long-term care facilities include nursing homes, personal care homes (PCHs) – often called assisted living facilities, and community living arrangements (CLAs).

The Office of the State LTCO contracts with community programs affiliated with Area Agencies on Aging. Approximately 50 certified LTCOs in Georgia – both staff and volunteers – are available to help residents. LTCOs complete extensive training to become authorized to resolve complaints. Some volunteers regularly visit residents and assist in other ways. Long-term care services, the physical environment, residents’ rights, and discharges are among the many concerns ombudsmen address on behalf of residents.

### Ombudsmen:

- Investigate and work to resolve problems or complaints affecting residents.
- Identify problem areas and advocate for change.
- Provide information, including advice to wisely select a facility.
- Promote resident, family and community involvement.
- Educate the community about the needs of residents.
- Coordinate efforts with others concerned with long-term care.
- Visit facilities routinely to talk to residents and monitor conditions.
- Educate facility staff about resident rights and other issues.

The SFY 2005 budget was \$2,828,325 (\$1,274,259 federal, \$1,161,650 state, and \$392,416 local). LTCOs served 3,197 individuals through complaint investigation, handling 5,235 complaints for nursing home residents and 1,544 for residents of PCHs and CLAs. Twenty-nine percent of complaints involved resident care; 29 percent, resident rights; 26 percent, quality of life issues; 9 percent, administration; and 7 percent, outside agency concerns.

Ombudsmen – together with *gmc*f (formally known as Georgia Medical Care Foundation), regulators, other consumer advocates, and providers – worked to promote quality in Georgia’s nursing homes, including reducing pressure ulcers, use of physical restraints, and unmanaged pain. As part of an initiative sponsored by the Office of Regulatory Services and personal care home provider associations, LTCOs helped select and celebrate personal care home “best practices.” The program convened a multi-agency workgroup to focus on the issue of registered sex offenders living in long-term care communities in order to better protect the rights and safety of residents. The program co-sponsored a statewide conference in May 2005, building teamwork and providing cross training among aging network professionals who work with vulnerable adults. For more information, visit [www.georgiaombudsman.org](http://www.georgiaombudsman.org), contact your community program, or call the Office of the State LTCO at 888-454-LTCO (5826).

# Fact Sheet