

## **Advocate Needed for Long-Term Care Facility Residents**

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCO) seeks volunteers to help advocate for the rights of residents in nursing homes and personal care homes. Highly trained volunteers visit long-term care facilities and listen to residents to help LTCO staff investigate and resolve complaints, with permission and direction from each resident.

“LTCO staff and volunteers focus on residents’ rights, providing a vital link to quality of life and care for over 70,000 residents of nursing homes and personal care homes across Georgia. By their regular presence in facilities, LTCO representatives build trust with residents. The residents know that LTCO representatives advocate for what the resident wants. ,” said Melanie S. McNeil, Georgia Long-Term Ombudsman for Georgia.

By law, the LTCO representative is required to visit quarterly each of Georgia’s 371 nursing homes and over 2,500 personal care homes. The LTCO Program meets an increasing demand for services with the help of volunteers who have exceptional listening and advocacy skills. Volunteers are trained to make friendly visits to residents. Those volunteers who choose to become certified are permitted to handle complaints.

Many residents do not have family or regular visitors who advocate for them. That’s when LTCO staff and volunteers step in to observe interactions between staff and residents in order to see that resident rights are being honored, and that the quality of care and life is good. Each facility displays a poster with LTCO Program contact information so that residents and families can call if a concern arises.

LTCO staff and volunteers work with residents on issues such as getting respectful treatment, having call lights answered timely, being served culturally appropriate meals, having the chance to engage in preferred activities, and more. Information must be kept confidential unless the resident gives permission for it to be shared. Certified LTCO volunteer representatives then discuss concerns on behalf of the residents with the facility management and work toward a resolution.

The LTCO team is accepting applications now from volunteers who want to become a caring and effective voice for vulnerable people in long-term care facilities. For information about training and opportunities, visit [www.GeorgiaOmbudsman.org](http://www.GeorgiaOmbudsman.org) or call the Office of the State Ombudsman, at 866-55AGING (866-552-4464) and select the option 5 for LTCOP.