

# Elder Advocate

Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa and Solano



## Message from our Executive Director

Our role at Ombudsman Services is to protect and advocate for older and dependent adults. With a focus on the health and well-being of our region's long-term care residents, it is not surprising that we spend a lot of time talking about the dark side of facilities—abuse, neglect, and compromised quality of life. Raising the visibility of the often inhuman conditions in long-term care facilities is part of our aspirational mission to restore dignity in aging.

And yet, with all of the time we spend in facilities, we also see examples of vibrant communities and quality care. Sometimes long-term care facilities provide the better option for an aging or dependent adult. Living at home (or aging in place) does not necessarily mean more independence and better quality of life. In fact, 57% of seniors who visit hospital emergency rooms are malnourished. Moving into a facility can provide a sense of community and an opportunity to develop deep friendships—things that may be missing when living alone in later life. For others, long-term care provides a safeguard against financial abuse and neglect by family and others.

Good or bad, the need for long-term care is growing and it is predicted that 80% of us will reside in a facility at some point during our lifetime. We at Ombudsman Services are hopeful that change is possible and that the number of good options will grow. In the meantime, we will continue our work to improve conditions in the 600 facilities we serve. We will investigate abuse, resolve complaints, and serve as a resource on innovative person-centered care practices. And, we will celebrate the successes—the facilities and care providers who are doing a good job and are models for others to follow.

Thank you for your commitment to our work and for empowering the aging in our community.

Best,  
Nicole Howell

*P.S. Please take a moment to read our volunteer spotlight. Our stalwart team of volunteers makes what we do possible and we are deeply grateful for their many contributions. For a special volunteer opportunity or way to contribute, check out our Mother's Day initiative, too!*

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# Mother's Day Initiative



Mother's Day should not be a lonely time for any resident who lives in long-term care. Unfortunately, visits from family are lacking for many long-term care residents, even on holidays. We hope to

brighten the lives of hundreds of residents on **Friday, May 11** when Ombudsman Services will personally deliver fresh bouquets in the facilities we serve.

## We need your help!

It will take a team of volunteers and generous contributions from our community of supporters to make this Mother's Day special for residents in our area.

Details on how you can help will be arriving in your mailbox soon. In the meantime, if you fancy yourself an amateur florist and would like to help arrange flowers on **May 11**, contact **Katy at 925.685.2070** or [katywijaya@ccombudsman.org](mailto:katywijaya@ccombudsman.org).

### Did you know?

- More than 60% of nursing home residents are women.
- Women have a longer life expectancy than men, outliving men by about five years on average.
- More than two-thirds of Americans age 85 or older are women.



# 411 on Long-term Care

Long-term care refers to a continuum of care designed to support the needs of people living with chronic health problems that affect their ability to perform everyday activities. We often get questions about the different types of residential facilities.

Here are the basics:

### Residential Care Facility for the Elderly



- Serve persons age 60+.
- Provides a residential option for those unable to live by themselves but don't need 24-hour nursing care.
- Considered non-medical facilities; are not required to have doctors, nurses, and nursing assistants on staff.

### Private Pay

### Skilled Nursing Facility



- Also called nursing homes.
- Provides round-the-clock nursing care and significant assistance with daily life.
- Has nursing staff on duty 24-hours a day and a physician to supervise each resident's care/therapy.

### Private Pay, Medicare and Medi-Cal

### Intermediate Care Facility



- Medical care in a small residential setting.
- Provides residential care to those who need nursing supervision and supportive services.
- These facilities are for residents 18-59.

### Medi-Cal

### Adult Residential Facility



- Provides care for adults 18-59 who are unable to furnish their own daily needs.
- Residents often experience developmental and physical impairments.

Typically SSI or SSP

## Volunteer Spotlight

# Giving Back, Giving Voice

Four years ago Ron saw a newspaper article about Ombudsman Services which mentioned an upcoming volunteer training. He was a few years into retirement and ready for a meaningful way to give back.

Fast forward to the present, Ron is now one of Ombudsman Services most seasoned volunteers having made big wins for long-term care residents in his region. Ron spent his career in aging services, though not in an advocacy role. As a fix-it guy, Ron says that being an Ombudsman forces him out of his comfort zone. "My role is to represent the resident and I've had to learn that not all issues or complaints can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction," he says. Sometimes that means just being there as the eyes, ears, and voice of the resident.

Luckily, some things don't need fixing. Ron appreciates when he sees a facility doing things well. As a car guy, Ron recognized a fellow-tinkerer in one facility, an elderly man who had a passion for restoring automobiles. That passion didn't cease as his memory faded and staff would find disassembled vacuum cleaners, cabinets, and equipment in his wake. Facility staff came up with a plan to allow the resident to fulfill his passion while keeping their equipment and furniture intact. They built a board of simple locks and deadbolts that was hung on a wall and available for "safe" tinkering.

*"I hope if I reach that stage in life, there will be others who will recognize and listen to my problems as well."*

— Ron, Field Ombudsman



## Become a Volunteer

There are a number of ways to volunteer. You can become a trained Field Ombudsman, arrange flowers for Mother's Day, and much more. As a Field Ombudsman, you will be part of a staff-supported team of volunteers with countless opportunities to make an immediate impact on the safety and quality of life of those living in long-term care facilities.

If you would like to learn more about our upcoming volunteer trainings, leadership opportunities on the board, the MSW Internship Program, or other ways to give of your time, please contact us at **925.685.2070** or email [katywijaya@ccombudsman.org](mailto:katywijaya@ccombudsman.org).

## Calendar of Events

# SaveDate THE Date

### Facility Education Event for Leadership & Staff

**April 24, 2018**

Pleasant Hill Community Center

#### Who Should Attend:

- Long-term care administrators, directors of nursing, and social workers
- Other directors and managers
- Direct care staff including nurses and activity professionals
- Indirect care staff including kitchen and maintenance staff



## June 2018

### Elder Abuse Awareness Month

A call-to-action for individuals, organizations and communities around the world to raise awareness about and promote a better understanding of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.



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