

Investigating concerns • Connecting to choices • Advocating for better care

THIRD EDITION

DECEMBER 2011

If you'd like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send a note to info@ltco.org.

LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN (LTCO)

Did you know....

- LTCO serves long term care consumers of *any age*? We currently serve consumers from 9 to 92 years of age.
- LTCO serves consumers of long term care residential services (nursing homes, assisted living, residential care, adult group homes) *AND* consumers of home and community-based services (including case management, personal care, adult day care, meals, physical, speech and occupational therapy, transportation, and homemaker), and some specialty services like Long Term Acute Care Hospitals & Veteran's Administration.

ADVOCACY INFORMATION

Impact of the federal budget on Ombudsman programs:

- The deficit reduction law passed 8/11 requires \$1.5 trillion in cuts to become automatic beginning in 2013, with half from domestic programs and half from defense. Medicaid would be spared cuts, and Medicare would be limited to a 2% reduction that would come from provider payments, not benefits. Cutting provider payments would not spare beneficiaries; nursing homes are already reducing wages, benefits, and staff in response to the cuts. Protecting Medicare and Medicaid would increase the need to take reductions from discretionary programs like the Older Americans Act, which funds the long-term care ombudsman program and a significant network of home and community-based services. *From The Consumer Voice.*

Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA):

- Senator Sanders (I-VT) released draft legislation 12/20 to reauthorize the OAA. Many important programs and services for older persons are mandated by and funded through the OAA. These include Long Term Care Ombudsman Programs, the National Family Caregiver Support Program, Congregate and Home-delivered Meals, State Legal Assistance Programs, and Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Chairman Sanders plans on incorporating other OAA reauthorization measures to create a larger bill to try to advance it through the Senate HELP Committee next spring.
- The Administration on Aging (AoA) has developed key principles to be used in educating legislators about the OAA. These include expanding eligibility for Ombudsman services to include residents of nursing facilities regardless of age (Ohio already does this) and to allow ombudsman to report abuse without consent where the resident is unable to give consent and the legal representative is the suspected abuser.

Ohio Office of Health Transformation (OHT) - recommendations of changes to the Medicaid program:

- Many of the proposed changes may have significant impacts on services to older persons, including potentially transferring the PASSPORT case management function from the Area Agencies on Aging to privately operated case management companies. This would have the result of dismantling a network of older persons' programs that has efficiently and effectively for over 20 years.
- Apply to CMS (Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services) to create a new Integrated Care Delivery System to provide comprehensive, person-centered care that addresses physical & behavioral health, long-term care & social needs of seniors and persons with disabilities through a new waiver for people eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid (called "dual eligible") and people with severe and persistent mental illness. This is projected to be initiated in September, 2012. Of the 37 states that have already applied for this program, 35 changed their programs to be provided through a managed care system.
- Combine the current 5 home and community-based Medicaid waivers (programs) that serve people with a nursing-facility level of care (i.e. PASSPORT, Choices, Assisted Living, Home Care and Aging Transitions) into one waiver to improve access into and within the service delivery system. The combination is projected to begin in July or September, 2012.
- Prioritize funding for home and community-based services to serve an additional nearly 13,000 Ohioans. Reform Nursing Facility payments by transitioning from a cost-based payment system to a price-based system that rewards efficiency and higher quality care.

STAFF NEWS

Nancy Kaufman, Clinical Manager for LTCO, retired this fall. In addition to her roles as Volunteer Coordinator and Clinical Manager, Nancy provided vital leadership to LTCO during a transitional period in 2011, and we thank her and wish her all the best. LTCO also welcomes back **April Fleming**, former Intake Ombudsman, rehired in October as the Ombudsman Supervisor. April brings a solid understanding of the role and scope of ombudsman work and an obvious passion for the mission. We are also pleased to welcome an intern from Notre Dame College, **Young Moon**, to work with us over his winter break on some special projects.

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Volunteer work is appreciated! A family member called recently to say thank you for the volunteer's investigation into their loved one's complaint about the care she was receiving at the nursing home.

Training. The volunteers have been sharpening their skills with recent training programs. We had mouth-watering information and lively discussions after the presentation from the professional chef at Menorah Park. It was interesting to hear what volunteers are reporting from their facilities and the wonderful changes taking place. To better coordinate out training activities, LTCO will begin holding regional volunteer trainings at three locations throughout our area in 2012 in addition to the quarterly trainings at the downtown office. The regional programs will be lead by a team of Ombudsman Specialists, so look for more information to follow.

Person-Centered Care (PCC). We believe PCC is the future for residents in long term care facilities. Recent volunteer training on PCC shared how the individual is the most important player in their care planning, and as how our volunteers will play an important role in working with resident councils and family councils in the nursing homes participating in our PCC project. If you'd like to work on this project, please contact Lauri at ext. 123.

Volunteer reports can be completed online through the LTCO website. Go to www.ltco.org then to How You Can Help, and the forms are available through links at the bottom of the page. The Intake Form (both electronic and hard-copy versions) have been separated from the Report Form. Questions? call Lauri. Scharf, Volunteer Coordinator, 216-696-2721, ext. 123.

Donate now! Help Long Term Care Ombudsman continue its vital and important work in the community.
Donate online at www.ltco.org or call 216.696.2719 for more information.