



# The Volunteer Ombudsman Program Fact Sheet

**STATE OF WISCONSIN  
BOARD ON AGING AND  
LONG TERM CARE**

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**Be a Voice for Long Term Care Consumers**

Advocates are WANTED and NEEDED in nursing homes!

You can become a qualified representative of the Board on Aging and Long Term Care in the role of a Volunteer Ombudsman. You can make a difference in the lives of people living in area nursing homes one visit at a time.

The Volunteer Ombudsman Program currently operates in 32 counties with offices in the following regions: Madison area, Milwaukee area, Stevens Point area, Green Bay area, and La Crosse area. See the Volunteer Ombudsman coverage map.

Volunteers must:

- Pass a criminal background check, (paid by our agency)
- Be free from conflict of interest
- Attend mandatory training
- Provide own transportation
- Make unannounced, weekly visits to an assigned facility during designated time frames
- Complete and submit monthly reports
- Give time: a minimum 6-month commitment
- Enjoy spending time with residents in nursing homes

**Volunteer Ombudsman Program**

Volunteer Ombudsmen make unannounced visits to designated nursing homes on a weekly basis. Volunteers observe, listen to, and interact with the residents. They observe general conditions of the facility and keep a log of this data. Volunteers talk with the residents and families guiding them in the right direction to resolve issues. Volunteers listen to and assist the resident with issues that may include, but are not limited to personal hygiene, daily cares, diet/meal issues, comfort, activities, staff relationships, personal empowerment, and facility conditions.

Volunteer Ombudsmen work with residents and their family members to communicate concerns and complaints by providing support and

empowerment. Volunteer Ombudsmen can assist residents by being their voice and with their permission report concerns and requests to the nursing home staff for resolution. Volunteers will meet with a designated contact at the nursing home before leaving the facility after each visit to share resident comments and observations made. This discussion is included in the volunteer's written monthly report as well.

The Volunteer Services Supervisor oversees the entire Volunteer Ombudsman Program and directly supervises the Volunteer Coordinators around the state. The Volunteer Coordinators are located in the regions of Green Bay, La Crosse, Madison, Milwaukee, and Stevens Point.

The Volunteer Ombudsman Program currently operates in 32 counties. Since 1994, the program has expanded from the original 4 counties of Dane, Milwaukee, Monroe, and Rock to include Adams, Brown, Calumet, Clark, Columbia, Crawford, Door, Grant, Jackson, Juneau, Kenosha, Kewaunee, La Crosse, Lincoln, Manitowoc, Marathon, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Portage, Racine, Richland, Kenosha, Sauk, Taylor, Vernon, Waupaca, Winnebago, and Wood. We want to continue expanding until the Volunteer Ombudsman Program is available in every county in the state.

The Volunteer Coordinators maintain contact with each volunteer through monthly reports, continuous regular training sessions, phone calls, e-mails and on-site visitations. Potential Volunteer Ombudsmen are thoroughly screened. Potential Volunteers will pass a criminal background check, complete the formal application and be free from Conflict of Interest prior to attending the mandatory initial training. Volunteer Ombudsmen are also required to attend periodic in-services on topics of interest that will enhance skills necessary for the volunteer position. Volunteers will need to provide their own transportation for visiting nursing homes and to attend trainings. Volunteers will adhere to the Board's policies and procedures for all aspects of the program including confidentiality, resident's rights, and the code of ethics of conduct while representing the agency as a Volunteer Ombudsman. Being a Volunteer Ombudsman in this program is a privilege and really does make a difference in the lives of the residents served, as well as, in the lives of the Volunteer Ombudsmen.

#### **Apply to Become a Volunteer Ombudsman**

Call the toll-free number **1-800-815-0015** to receive a screening packet or complete the online application available on the website of the Board on Aging and Long Term Care, at: [longtermcare.wi.gov](http://longtermcare.wi.gov).