

When case managers work with a Long-Term Care (LTC) ombudsman, they can build a collaborative and effective partnership to advocate for the well-being and rights of residents. Case managers, often serving as the link between residents and care providers, can play a key role in ensuring that concerns are addressed promptly and efficiently. Here are some tips for case managers working with an LTC ombudsman:

### 1. Understand Their Role

- LTC ombudsmen are advocates who address concerns related to long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes and assisted living centers, as well as home and community-based settings. They work to resolve issues related to quality of care, residents' rights, and facility conditions.
- They are impartial, confidential, and advocate for the residents' best interests, not the facilities.

### 2. Establish Clear Communication

- **Open Dialogue:** Maintain open lines of communication with the ombudsman. Share relevant details about the case and be clear about the issues you're facing. This ensures that the ombudsman can provide the best possible support for the resident.
- **Timely Updates:** Keep the ombudsman informed of any changes to the resident's condition, treatment plans, or the status of ongoing concerns. Regular updates help keep both parties aligned and ensure that action is taken promptly.

### 3. Provide Complete and Accurate Information

- **Thorough Documentation:** Ensure that all relevant documents, such as care plans, incident reports, and any communication with the facility, are shared with the ombudsman. The more comprehensive the information, the better the ombudsman can assess and address the issue.
- **Detailed Case Background:** When introducing the case, provide background information on the resident's condition, care needs, and any previous efforts made to resolve the concern. This helps the ombudsman understand the full scope of the issue.

### 4. Define the Goal

- **Clarify Desired Outcome:** Work with the ombudsman to clearly define what you hope to achieve. Whether it's resolving a care issue, ensuring the resident's safety, or educating the family about residents' rights, setting clear goals will help guide the process.
- **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Understand that the ombudsman may have insights into alternative solutions or courses of action. Be open to their recommendations and work collaboratively to achieve the best outcome for the resident.

### 5. Respect the Ombudsman's Role and Independence

- **Impartiality:** Understand that LTC ombudsmen are independent advocates for residents and their rights. They will be impartial and act in the best interests of the resident, not the facility or other stakeholders.
- **Confidentiality:** Ensure that both you and the ombudsman maintain confidentiality, as many of the issues discussed may be sensitive and private. Trust in the ombudsman's duty to protect the resident's privacy.

### 6. Be Prepared to Listen and Learn

- **Learn from the Ombudsman:** LTC ombudsmen have a deep understanding of residents' rights, legal protections, and best practices in long-term care. Be open to learning about new regulations or approaches to improving care.
- **Seek Guidance on Complex Cases:** For cases that involve complex legal or ethical issues, don't hesitate to ask the ombudsman for guidance. Their expertise can help clarify possible solutions or approaches.

## 7. Be Proactive in Reporting Issues

- **Early Intervention:** If a potential issue arises, it's important to address it early before it escalates. Share concerns with the ombudsman as soon as possible so that they can begin their investigation or advocacy efforts without delay.
- **Regular Check-ins:** If there are ongoing issues, regularly check in with the ombudsman to monitor the situation's progress and make sure that the necessary follow-up steps are being taken.

## 8. Focus on Resident-Centered Care

- **Put the Resident First:** Always center the resident's needs, preferences, and rights in any conversation or decision-making process. Case managers and ombudsmen should align on the goal of enhancing the quality of life for the resident and advocating for their well-being.
- **Empower the Resident:** Encourage residents to voice their own concerns if possible, and involve them in decisions. Ombudsmen can help facilitate this process, ensuring that residents' voices are heard and respected.

## 9. Maintain Professionalism and Respect

- **Work Together, Not Against Each Other:** Keep in mind that both the case manager and the LTC ombudsman are working toward the same goal—improving the care and environment for the resident. Approach any disagreements or challenges with professionalism and respect.
- **Collaborative Mindset:** Focus on finding solutions together. While case managers may be familiar with the resident's medical and social needs, ombudsmen offer valuable perspectives on legal rights and facility regulations.

## 10. Provide Feedback

- **Follow-Up and Feedback:** After a resolution is reached, provide feedback to the ombudsman on the outcome and whether it met the goals. This can help them refine their approach in the future and may also lead to broader improvements in the facility or system.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Share any successes or challenges faced during the collaboration, so that both you and the ombudsman can adjust your methods in the future.

## 11. Know When to Involve the Ombudsman

- **Escalating Issues:** If a concern escalates and cannot be resolved through internal channels, the ombudsman can act as an advocate and mediator. However, if the issue involves abuse, neglect, or severe regulatory violations, the ombudsman should be involved as soon as possible.
- **Collaborate in Advocacy:** Case managers can be instrumental in advocating for systemic change, and working with the ombudsman can help drive positive outcomes not just for individual residents, but for the long-term care facility as a whole.

By partnering effectively with an LTC ombudsman, case managers can enhance their advocacy efforts and work toward creating a safer, more supportive environment for long-term care residents.

**Ohio Department of Aging Ombudsman website:**

<https://aging.ohio.gov/care-and-living/get-help/get-an-advocate/resident-rights>