

Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass Contracted to Operate Kentucky Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

The Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass (NHOA), based in Lexington, KY, has contracted with The Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) to operate the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. Sherry Huff Culp was named State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

NHOA has provided Long Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) services in Central Kentucky since 1981. NHOA's local Bluegrass District LTC Ombudsman program is an award winning program providing comprehensive advocacy services to people who live in licensed long term care facilities.

"The Board of Directors at NHOA is dedicated to the independence and strengthening of the Office of State Long Term Care Ombudsman. Our mission is to improve care and quality of life for residents of licensed long term care facilities in Kentucky" stated Peter Brown, Board Chairman at the NHOA.

The Administration for Community Living recently clarified conflict of interest requirements within the Older Americans Act. The state unit on aging, (DAIL, is required to ensure the long-term care ombudsman program can exercise independence in action, free from significant influence by any organization which may interfere with an impartial investigation and/or resolution of complaints. DAIL provides guardianship services to many residents of long-term care facilities and other agencies within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services regulate, investigate and pay long-term care facilities. Therefore, to ensure independence it was necessary for DAIL to place the long-term care ombudsman program outside of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

The new State Long Term Care Ombudsman, Sherry Huff Culp, became a Certified Long Term Care Ombudsman at NHOA in 1996. She first served as a volunteer and later Director of Programs and Services. In March 2009, she was named the Bluegrass District Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Executive Director of NHOA where she directed services in a 17 county area serving nearly 5,000 LTC residents and managed a corps of 35 certified long term care ombudsmen. Culp has provided training to ombudsmen and advocates across the country on topics ranging from Residents' Rights to LTCO Program Management.

According to Culp, "The ombudsman role is one of pure resident advocate just as Congress intended it to be, in amendments to the Older American Act. LTC Ombudsmen advocate for residents; protect the rights of residents; identify, investigate and work to solve complaints; provide visits to residents; provide information and assistance to the community; and monitor government actions affecting residents. When residents feel unsure, powerless, or afraid, they often turn to their ombudsman to be their voice.

Ombudsmen also educate residents, families, friends, and long term care facility staff about residents' rights, abuse prevention, and problem solving.

“My goal for the Kentucky Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is that every ombudsman has the tools and support to provide advocacy services to residents in their district and take actions that lead to resident satisfaction. I envision residents receiving quality individualized care in a home like environment. My vision is that Kentucky is a place where people who need long term care receive the care and attention they need in a dignified manner.” Stated Sherry Culp

Sherry Culp can be reached at sherryculp@ombuddy.org or 859-277-9215

The Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass, Inc. is a nonprofit agency located inside the Lexington Senior Center at 1530 Nicholasville Road, Lexington, KY 40503