

THE POWER OF MY VOICE: Kentucky's Nursing Home Residents' Rights Forums



A review of the 20 nursing home forums held by
Kentucky's 15 District Long-Term Care
Ombudsman Programs in October 2024



Report to Kentucky's Cabinet for Health
and Family Services
Department of Aging
and Independent Living

Submitted by Sherry Culp
Kentucky State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Table of Contents

Summary	Page 2
Objective & Main Conclusions	Page 2
Schedule of Forums	Page 3
Format of Forums	Page 4
Trends in Resident Responses	Page 4
Recommendations to Improve Long-Term Care	Page 5
Recommendations for Future Forums	Page 9
Appendix A: Voices from the Forums	Page 11
Appendix B: Forum Roadmap	Page 29
Appendix C: Memo from DAIL	Page 44
Appendix D: Sample Save the Date	Page 47
Appendix E: Proclamation for Residents' Rights Month	Page 49

Summary

In August of 2024, Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department of Aging and Independent Living met with the Kentucky State Long-Term Ombudsman Programs to issue a directive to host Nursing Home Residents' Rights Forums in each of the 15 Area Development Districts (ADD). The forums, based on a program held by the Buffalo Trace ADD in October 2023, were required to be in-person, in October, and comprised of nursing home residents.

The 15 District Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs hosted a total of 20 forums featuring 145 residents from 83 facilities across the Commonwealth.

Objectives

The major objectives of the forums were to:

- Promote the voice of Kentucky's nursing home residents.
- Strengthen nursing home residents' presence within their communities.
- Promote the Kentucky Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

Main Conclusions

- Residents expressed in every forum the need for more staff in their nursing homes to provide basic care needs.
- Residents were very appreciative of the opportunity to be heard and to meet residents from other facilities.
- Residents expressed appreciation for long-term care staff who treat them like individuals.
- Future forums should be planned further in advance to allow programs enough time to balance planning the forum with their daily work.
- Forums should come with funding for the additional expenses (location fees, audio/visual equipment rentals, refreshments, transportation, direct care staff, tokens of appreciation for residents, etc.).

Schedule of Forums Held

<u>Date</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Location</u>
10/2/2024	Pennyrile	Christian County Senior Citizens Center
10/3/2024	Northern Kentucky	Kenton County Public Library
10/3/2024	Lincoln Trail	Carl M. Brashear Radcliff Veterans Center
10/4/2024	Buffalo Trace	MCTC Maysville
10/9/2024	Bluegrass	Lexington Central Library (CANCELED)
10/9/2024	KIPDA	Essex Nursing and Rehab Center
10/10/2024	Kentucky River	Perry County Public Library
10/15/2024	Gateway	Carl Perkins Center
10/16/2024	Barren River	Barren River Area Development District
10/16/2024	Big Sandy	Mountain Arts Center
10/16/2024	Lake Cumberland	Russell County Public Library
10/16/2024	Purchase	McCracken County Extension Office
10/17/2024	Green River	Green River Area Development District
10/17/2024	Kentucky River	Happy Top Park Community Center
10/22/2024	KIPDA	St. Matthews-Eline Public Library
10/24/2024	FIVCO	Greenup County Extension Office
10/25/2024	Cumberland Valley	London Community Center
10/28/2024	Bluegrass	Harrison County Extension Office
10/28/2024	Bluegrass	Richmond Public Library
10/29/2024	Bluegrass	Boyle County Extension Office
10/30/2024	Lincoln Trail	Lincoln Trail Area Development District

Format of Forums

According to a DAIL memo dated August 15, 2024, to the 15 District Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs, the forums were required to be in-person, in October, and comprised only of nursing home residents. The memo is attached to this report in Appendix B.

Commissioner Victoria Elridge also required each forum to include “welcoming remarks from the District LTC Ombudsman or a Council member, remarks from state leaders for the presentation of the Proclamation, and the 2023 video Buffalo Trace produced for the inaugural forum.”

The memo notified the DLTCOP that DAIL would create a customizable Save the Date, which is attached to this report in Appendix C.

Commissioner Elridge sent State Ombudsman Sherry Culp a sample agenda and questions, suggesting that forums should be 90 minutes long, with the venue opening 1 hour before the forum begins and closing 1 hour after the forum concludes. The final agenda was incorporated into the Forum Roadmap document created by the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office, attached to this report in Appendix A.

Guidance from DAIL included offering long-term care facilities the opportunity to set up a table to display and promote their facility before and after the forum.

Trends in Resident Responses

The following trends were identified after collecting and analyzing resident commentary and District LTCO feedback:

1. More staffing is needed in nursing homes, especially direct care staff.
2. Being respected and treated like family by facility staff was important to residents.
3. Nursing home residents feel isolated from the outside community.
4. Nursing home residents value their relationship with other residents, their roommates, and facility staff.
5. Activities are important to nursing home residents and improve their quality of life.
6. Nursing home residents are grateful to facility staff for the care, company, and companionship they provide.

7. Nursing home residents thought direct care staff should have better wages and benefits for the work they do.
8. Nursing home residents recognized LTC ombudsmen helped them resolve issues, find their voice and empower them to use their voices.
9. Nursing home residents enjoyed participating in the forums and felt it was a way to have their voices heard by others in the community.

Recommendations for Long-Term Care

Based on the feedback received from the nursing home residents during these 20 forums, the Kentucky State Long-Term Care Ombudsman recommends the following to improve long-term care:

1. Increase nursing home direct care staff.
2. Strengthen training requirements for State Registered Nurse Aides.
3. Strengthen and grow the Kentucky State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.
4. Improve privacy options for residents.
5. Increase investments in meaningful activities and opportunities for community engagement.
6. Strengthen Kentucky's State Survey Agency, the Office of Inspector General.

Increase Nursing Home Direct Care Staff

Residents in these forums identified staffing as their number one concern. They told countless stories of how terrible their lives feel when there are not enough staff in the building to provide for their basic care.

Improving staffing in nursing homes has been the subject of many taskforces, research studies, and advocacy efforts. The issue is complex, but there are many proven, reasonable steps Kentucky can take to increase staffing levels in long-term care facilities.

More than 20 years ago the federal government commissioned a report to research the minimum staffing required in nursing homes. Since 2001, we have known that residents require 4.1 hours of direct care *just to avoid negative health outcomes*. This study finds that residents need:

- 3.2 hours of care from Certified Nurse Aids per day
- 0.9 hours of care from Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses per day

In April of 2024, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare issued a final rule requiring facilities staff at a minimum of 3.48 hours per resident per day:

- 2.45 hours of care from Certified Nurse Aids per day
- 0.55 hours of care from Registered Nurses per day

This standard is at risk of being scrapped in 2025 due to immense pressure from the nursing home industry. Kentucky can assure a minimum amount of care that over 20 years of research has proven is needed to avoid negative health outcomes. Based on resident input and the research of 2001, it is recommended the Commonwealth pass a requirement for nursing homes to provide at least 4.1 hours of direct care per resident per day.

Strengthen Training Requirements for State Registered Nurse Aides

Note: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid use the term Certified Nurse Aides, while Kentucky uses the term State Registered Nurse Aides.

Residents reported receiving care from aides who did not have adequate training to meet their needs. One resident said that aides who become certified through the nursing home's in-house training did not understand the importance of washing and drying his skin when they change his briefs. He experienced skin breakdown and discomfort due to improper care.

Currently, Kentucky only requires the federal minimum of 75 hours of training to become a State Registered Nurse Aide, of which 16 hours is supervised clinical training. Many neighboring states recognize that this is not an adequate amount of training to provide the essential care residents need.

- Tennessee requires Certified Nurse Aides to receive 100 hours of training, split between 40 hours in the classroom, 20 hours in a classroom laboratory, and 40 hours in clinical supervised training. Of the 40 hours in clinical supervised training, at least 24 hours must be in long-term care.
- West Virginia requires 120 hours of training, including a minimum of 55 hours of clinically supervised training.
- Missouri requires at least 175 hours of training, split between 75 hours of classroom training and 100 hours of "on-the-job" training.

Kentucky's nursing home residents recommend the Commonwealth increase the minimum training requirements for State Registered Nurse Aides to be better aligned with our neighboring states.

Strengthen and Grow the Kentucky State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

One common theme across forums was the importance of the Long-Term Care Ombudsmen Program (LTCOP) in Kentucky. Residents voiced their appreciation for the LTCOP while recognizing the necessity of the program. Since LTCO's are resident-directed advocates that do not work for LTC facilities, they are the only individuals in the state at the bedside of LTC residents, educating them about their rights, and working to resolve complaints to their satisfaction. During the forums, residents identified their LTCO as "problem solvers" whom they trusted to take complaints and concerns to and were very helpful in resolving complaints to their satisfaction. LTCO's regularly visit LTC facilities, providing a consistent and trusting person for residents to go to for help.

Just the act of entering institutionalized living, like a nursing home, disempowers residents and creates a power imbalance between facility staff that work there and the individuals that live there. 60% of residents who live in LTC facilities do not get any visitors at all and the LTCO is often times one of the only individuals, outside of facility staff and state agencies, that come to their bedside to visit and check in on how they are doing. This is extremely meaningful for LTC residents - as they reported throughout the forums. Without the ombudsman, residents might not have anyone to advocate for them based on what they want. Ombudsmen involve residents in the problem-solving process and take direction from residents.

Kentucky has 602 long-term care facilities (including nursing homes, assisted living communities, personal care homes, and family care homes) and approximately 40,255 residents. Strengthening and growing the LTCOP would allow residents to gain more access to services. District LTC Ombudsman programs need more support to provide adequate resident visitation, case work, community education and volunteer management.

Increase Investments In Meaningful Activities And Opportunities For Community Engagement

An overwhelming number of residents specifically discussed the importance of activity staff and opportunities. Residents see their activity department as equally important as their nursing department. However, many reported that the activity department was under-resourced, with a tight budget and limited staff time.

In addition, residents expressed feeling disconnected from the outside community due to lack of transportation, public fear of COVID in the nursing homes, and funding. Residents felt unimportant, forgotten about, and stigmatized by this disconnect. Residents who had been in the nursing home before COVID noted that outside groups had dropped off and not resumed their visits since the pandemic.

Facilities that have their own transportation still face challenges in accommodating multiple wheelchairs, having staff to help escort residents during outings, and paying for activities that are outside of the slim budget they allocate to the department. Facilities without their own bus or van may not have access to reliable public transportation.

Residents recommend investing more funds and resources into activities, transportation, and community engagement.

Improve Privacy Options For Residents

Residents who discussed the lack of privacy in long-term care expressed a desire to have the option of a private room. Many residents described living with a roommate who had cognitive impairments, disrupting their sleep, rifling through their things, and even getting into altercations. Residents stated they could not get a private room because of the lack of availability or because of affordability.

Some of Kentucky's neighbors have already begun prioritizing privacy in long-term care. Ohio has incentivized nursing homes to create a greater number of private rooms in their buildings. This program will pay additional funds to providers with private rooms.

Kentucky may also consider allowing the cost of a private room to be a Medicaid eligible expense. Currently, private rooms are only approved as a Medicaid eligible expense if the resident has a medical need.

Strengthen Kentucky's State Survey Agency, the Office of Inspector General

Kentucky is currently behind in performing "annual" surveys of nursing homes. Federal requirements state that nursing homes must be surveyed and recertified every 9 to 15 months. However, 53 percent of the Commonwealth's nursing homes have gone 2 or more years since being surveyed.

While this number has improved since 2023, when 73 percent of facilities had not been certified in 2 or more years, Kentucky must prioritize catching up.

Residents recognize the effect of this backlog. They reported feeling like nobody cares, because no one has come in to correct the problems they face in their homes.

Residents also recommended that these annual surveys be unannounced, because they see that the nursing home knows or predicts when surveyors will show up. Current regulations require these surveys to be unannounced already. However, residents feel certain that someone gives administration a heads up.

Residents recommend more frequent unannounced visits from the state regulatory agency.

Recommendations for Future Forums

After completion of 20 Nursing Home Resident Forums across Kentucky, district ombudsmen (DO) feedback was collected, compiled and analyzed to identify challenges and recommendations that would make coordinating future resident forums more successful, manageable and achievable. Districts reported several challenges they faced while planning the event. These included:

1. Being given short notice on the requirement to have a resident forum in October 2024 in August 2024.
2. The planning process took away from regular LTC ombudsmen work with residents.
3. It is difficult to locate a venue with enough space and handicap accessibility (bathrooms) to accommodate nursing home residents' needs.
4. Not all nursing homes attended and participated in the event.
5. Lack of participation from community leadership.
6. Facility staff were not always available to escort residents to the event.
7. October is respiratory illness season, so several facilities backout due to outbreaks.
8. District ombudsmen felt they had no/little assistance from the Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) in planning and executing the forums.
9. No budget or additional funding was provided to DOs for the event.

DOs reported that short notice of the requirement to have a resident forum in each district of Kentucky made it difficult to coordinate and plan the event. Without enough planning time for the forum, the Kentucky Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (KLTCOP) felt there wasn't enough time to engage their communities nor state and local leaders for forum participation. In the future, the KLTCOP recommends being given more time to plan the forums and requests more flexibility in forum formatting. October is Residents' Rights month and is an extremely busy time for the KLTCOP. October is a month where many district programs plan facility staff trainings, LTC residents' rights trainings, attending LTC resident council meetings, and participating in community education activities that highlight residents' rights. More flexibility is suggested so DO's can plan resident forums at other times during the year. These forums were participated in by 27% of Kentucky's 299 nursing homes – with more notice and planning, we hope to increase this number.

The KLTCOP recommends that future forms allow LTC residents to participate virtually, and not just in-person. A total of 145 nursing home residents participated (in-person) in

panel discussions throughout October forums, this number represents approximately .5% of all nursing home residents in Kentucky. Allowing districts to use technology via Zoom, Teams, etc. would not only increase resident participation in the forums, but it would allow residents who would otherwise not have been able to travel (due to health condition, disability, etc.) to attend and participate in the forum. Several districts mentioned recording their forum event so that the video can be shown at facilities for residents that did not get to travel and participate on resident panels.

The KLTCOP also recommends having the option to hold forums at LTC facilities so that more residents can attend as well, and not face travel issues (like having to wait lengthy amounts of time to use the bathroom). In addition to holding the forums at LTC facilities, we also recommend that if other venues are identified for the forum, these venues be no further than 30 minutes away from their home facility.

Lastly, the KLTCOP recommends involving LTC residents in the process of developing questions and topics of discussion at future forums. Resident overwhelmingly reported positive feelings about the forums and communicated that they would like the opportunity to do the forums again. Since the forums are focused on and around LTC residents, they should be involved in what questions and topics are discussed at their forum. Doing so would not only empower residents, but it also supports the idea of person-centered care by honoring what individual residents feel they need/would like to discuss during forums.

Appendix A:

Voices from the Resident Forums

The 20 forums held throughout the Commonwealth proved to be a great opportunity for residents to gather and share their experiences. Below we review the questions that were asked, direct quotes from residents, and a summary of the responses.

What does “home” mean to you, and what helps you feel more at home in the nursing home?

“My nursing home family and some of the staff members help me feel at home.”

“Being in a place where I’m loved and cared about, that means home.”

“The nursing home is a good place to go. All the nurses and aides make you feel like family and that’s the way it’s supposed to be.”

“Everyone has treated me with kindness and respect and that’s important when you’re old.”

“It took time to adapt. But love and care from staff gave me the hope to push through.”

“We all become family. We are a community. I came in at a young age-15 years ago- and I have been in two different facilities and it’s all about the people.”

“What’s home to me? It’s being around people who care about you and your living; it’s making connections and staff make it easy for it to feel like home here.”

“If there’s someone new [working] it would be nice if they would come in and introduce themselves and I could introduce myself to them and I can tell them about myself, like when I like to wake up, how I like to be lifted. I’m part of the 60% [of residents] that do not have any family or friends that come to visit me - my youngest daughter doesn’t come visit me. I was 400lbs when I came here, and now I’m 364. I want my life back, even if that means a walker.”

“I feel respected. I think other residents feel respected when the person taking care of you has a smile on their face - that means a lot.”

Residents shared feeling at home when their care givers treat them like family. Residents in every forum mentioned the importance of staff who focus on treating residents like a person and involving them in their own care.

“Home is where I’m safe, secure, loved, and cared for.”

“I’m grateful for the place to stay. If not for the nursing home, I would be homeless. I have friends and family at the nursing home that I never had before.”

“Home is where you have peace and contentment.”

“People don’t have to look over their shoulders. Everyone here is in a wheelchair or on a cane and you can easily do harm to us if we were out in the world, whereas if you are in a [nursing home], you don’t have to worry about being hurt. Everyone is in the same position.”

Residents also told audiences that home means being safe. Multiple residents shared about the living situations they were in before moving into the nursing home.

“When I first got there, I didn’t think I was going to make it but [the Director of Nursing] came in my room on the first day and took my hand she said, ‘We’ll make this your home!’ I asked her if she was sure, she replied “YES!”

“I was very scared, and I’d always lived independently. It took me a month to come out of my room. Having staff that took the time to listen to me and help me really made a difference.”

“I was lost when I first came into the nursing home. I had no family at all that came to visit me. Now, the facility staff and other residents are my family.”

“I never was an outgoing person, until the Activities Director pulled me out of my room.”

“My first night at the nursing home I cried- I was away from my family. I’ll never forget Ms. [staff member] - she became my family, checking on me, talking to me, checking in on me - these are my family. I’m so grateful to nursing home facilities. I used to work at one after graduating nursing school. I’m grateful for my sisters and brothers [residents] and that closeness.

Residents stressed the importance of staff who welcome new residents and encourage them to participate in the daily activities. Nearly every resident told stories thanking the activity staff for their role in making them feel at home.

“I asked God to help me. I had to pull up my boots and do some of it on my own.”

“I knew I had to give up and just make the best of the rest of my days.”

“Leaving home was hard. Losing my independence was hard.”

Another common theme came from residents describing the work they did themselves to make the nursing home feel like home.

“I have perfectly good friends here, but I still don’t really consider it my home.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever be able to call the nursing home my home. I exist there, I feel like I’m in the way.”

“I’m so grateful to have a place to stay, but it’s not home. It’s only a pitstop.”

“I appreciate my friends there, but I’d never call the nursing home my home.”

“I’d rather be home, I’m a homebody.”

Several residents expressed that they did not feel like the nursing home was their home or could ever be their home. Even those who felt grateful for the nursing home, staff, and other residents still did not feel at home in the facility.

“My least favorite phrase is, ‘they allow you to do that.’”

“I hate the word allowance - we are not kids. When the social security goes up, the personal needs “allowance” should go up.”

“I would like to do Undercover Boss so people can see what it’s like.”

*“I’ve said that we need to be included in the staff meetings. The administration needs to understand that the decisions they make are **about** us. We should be able to participate in those decisions.”*

Residents had several suggestions to improve the homelike quality of the nursing home. In addition to being treated like family or like a person, residents expressed a desire to be treated like an adult – not a child or someone who cannot do anything for themselves. Some residents called for opportunities to provide input for policies and decisions made by the facility before they are put in place.

How is your voice heard as a resident in a nursing home? Do you know how to file grievances?

Note: These questions were asked separately, but many residents had the same or similar answers for both.

“We have a resident council one time a month, they see grievances get to the right people and praises get to the workers.”

“We have a resident council every month where we invite the facility department heads; we talk about each department: maintenance, dietary, activities, etc. The good and the bad- they want to know all of it.”

“I’m the president of the resident council. People tell me what they like and don’t like and I tell people and they listen.”

“Through resident councils - matter of fact I’m thinking of running for president.”

Many residents reported that they go to Resident Council meetings to make sure their voices are heard and to file grievances. Resident Council meetings are required by nursing homes participating in Medicare and Medicaid. Many of the residents in the forums were Resident Council Presidents.

“We only have so many CNAs and a lot of people that need help getting up. We have meetings at 11am and we break after an hour. It’s very difficult when you only have two CNAs on a hall and 15-20 people that want to get up to go the meeting.”

“It’s difficult to get people to come to the meetings. I think it’s important – people come to me with complaints, but they won’t take the opportunity to come to the meetings where they can voice their concerns.”

“We start with the resident council meeting. They write down our problems, but it takes a long time to solve them. They need to hear firsthand what we’re going through- We need people from different departments to come to our meetings.”

Residents also discussed the challenges of holding effective Resident Council meetings. Residents reported that

“If I have concerns, I talk to my activities director, she’ll find someone to help me!”

“You’ve got to know who to talk to. Sometimes, you can tell two or three people but nothing gets done. You have to find the right person for the right thing.”

“If I need cleaned up, need food, if I change my mind on what I want to wear, I bring it up to staff I trust will help me.”

“I go to the Administrator and talk about what I need.”

Another theme across the forums was the importance of finding the right person to hear your voice. Most residents said activities staff, social workers, administrators, and unit nurses were reliable listeners who tried to fix problems. Many residents at the forum knew who to talk to about specific problems.

“I’m the queen I tell them what I want.”

“Just yell out and say something!”

“All you have to do is speak up and ask.”

“When I was working years ago, a boss told me a squeaky wheel gets the grease so from now on I’m squeaking.”

“I don’t belong to those groups, but my concerns are verbalized and I’m grateful for that. I think when you’re in a place like the nursing home you do the best with what you’ve got. It’s important to realize there are people there to help you.”

Some residents reported feeling very confident in speaking up for their needs.

“I am resident council president at [my nursing home]. Sometimes it seems like our aides consider us “blobs in a bed.” I’m a poet and I write and one of my poems is called “blobs in a bed.”

“I socialize with a lot of people at the nursing home. My voice is heard by doing activities and when I talk to my roommate. I love to talk to people, play the guitar. When my roommate has a problem, me and her talk it out and it makes her and I feel better.”

“The 100-year-old resident- it’s her voice I want to be. I don’t like bullies, and some of the other residents can be bullies and I make my voice heard then, we need to look out for each other all the time.”

Several residents used their voice in arts and relationships.

“I would like people to realize that when you leave us without a way to give our opinions it makes us upset and lonely, and we get grumpy and take it out on the staff. We can’t make people understand – we need more people.

“Sometimes I feel intimidated. I want someone to listen.”

“People are afraid of retaliation.”

“It’s very difficult for residents to have the courage to stand up and say “this isn’t right. Just because you own the corporation that runs the house you can’t stick us in the closet and close the door.”

“The ones up here today- we’re lucky enough to still have sound mind, we’re speaking up for those who can’t speak.”

“We represent ourselves today. But we don’t represent the others that couldn’t come here.”

Although many residents shared the ways they use their voice, every forum included discussion of the difficult position residents are in when they complain. Residents also acknowledged the fact that they both *do* and *do not* represent residents who couldn’t come to the forums. Nearly every resident at the forums mentioned speaking up on behalf of their roommates or other residents in the facility.

“I let Donna the ombudsman know.”

I’m very thankful for what the ombudsman program does. We are on a first name basis now. She’s been an asset to all of us.”

“This woman (ombudsman) is my lifeline because I am new. Things are changing because of her. I thank God for her.”

“We don’t know how to file a grievance but we know we go to the ombudsman.”

“You can file a grievance. You are supposed to get an answer within 72 hours and if that doesn’t work, we can call the ombudsman. If that doesn’t work, we go to the OIG.”

Many of the residents attending the forums knew about the ombudsman program. Residents frequently referred to their ombudsman as a resource when discussing Resident Councils, filing grievances, and making their voices heard.

Do you have control over your daily schedule? Do you feel like you have a lot of choices?

“I don’t have a lot of choices in my daily schedules, but I love to go to activities.”

“Having choices is important to me- choices in activities and my daily schedule.”

“We deserve the time. We want to do things like relax and we have the choice to do that.”

Many residents felt they had some level of control over their daily routines and schedules, while others shared that their daily schedules were mostly dictated by facility staff.

“I don’t have many choices. We need more activities. We have to eat on the staff’s schedule.”

“I get to choose when I go to bed, and I get to wake up when I want to. Staff do as much as they can. [Direct care worker] makes sure our needs are met on a daily basis.”

“I wouldn’t call it a schedule, but we get to do what we want, [like play] bingo. All in all, I feel like I have control over my daily activities.”

“Food wise we don’t get any choices; we can only choose from a few alternatives.”

Many residents spoke about the importance of being able to decide when they went to bed and woke up in the morning, as well as having choices and alternative food and meal options.

“We have great activities.”

“We have activities after dinner time. Everybody doesn’t have to go to bed when the sun goes down [and] our Administrator supports that!”

Residents were eager to talk about how important activities were in their daily lives and schedules while living at the nursing home.

After being asked about whether they have control over what their daily life looks like, one resident paused to think, finally stating, *“I have the control to go outside.”* While their answer was short, it spoke volumes to the bare minimum expectations these individuals had about life in their nursing home.

How is your day impacted when there aren’t enough staff working?

“Short staffing is the cancer of this facility, whether it’s on purpose or not.”

“The CNA’s - when they ain’t here, it’s rough.”

“We don’t get appropriately cared for.”

“Big problem is changing of the guard at shifts. There’s not enough people to go around. But they work really hard to take care of everyone.”

“I love when state [OIG] is in the building because the food is hot, call bells are answered. But the next day - things go back to the way it was.”

“It takes the aides about 30-40 minutes to answer call lights. What happens to me if I were to feel a heart attack and no one shows up for 45 minutes? You’re gone.”

“Is there any way they can have an intercom like they do in the hospitals where someone can say “can I help you?” For us as individuals who are sitting there waiting we could have low sugar or have fallen.”

“We’ll get meals late. Coffee is set out really early, but not served to us.”

“They won’t wash and dry you off if you need a brief change.”

“I’m so sick of having COVID being shoved down my throat. COVID didn’t make this mess [short staffing], it was there before.”

“On the days we are short staffed I usually get my pain medication late. When I get my medication one or two hours late, I can’t stay on top of my pain.”

“When they’re short staffed, you get put on the back burner. I like to take my shower during the day before I go to my day program. When there’s enough staff, I appreciate my shower.”

Residents consistently shared stories of poor care, late meals, and late medication when there are not enough direct care staff working.

“Nurses are overwhelmed when the facility is understaffed.”

“When staff who are paid to take care of me treat me like a burden, I feel upset.”

“I’ve also noticed that the employees will come in and turn the light off and leave and not say anything. When we lived at home we were in charge of things and made decisions every day and now people don’t listen.”

“You wouldn’t treat your own mom like that. But I tell them and they are pretty open once you tell them.”

“It’s really easy to notice on your hall who are the people who pay attention and the people who turn around and walk the other way and don’t want to deal with any kind of problem.”

Residents observe significant changes in the attitudes and feelings of direct care staff. Although many residents worried about staff being overwhelmed, they also felt like staff were less compassionate, patient, and attentive when they were not adequately supported.

“Not enough training for new CNA’s. We have 3 CNAs for 16 people.”

“When there is low staffing which has been the case since COVID, they bring in Agency staff, who don’t know anything about us.”

“The aides that are trained by the facility do not know how to do basic things.”

While discussing staffing levels, residents also recommended better training for Certified Nurse Aids (State Registered Nurse Aides). Currently, Kentucky requires just the national minimum of 75 hours of training to become a CNA – 59 hours of classroom or online training followed by 16 hours of supervised clinical practice. Many of Kentucky’s nursing homes are allowed to train CNAs in-house, which some residents found to lead to less competent aides.

“I can’t say enough about how great CNA’s and nurses are. They do the work of 3 or 4 people. It’s not the CNA’s fault, but this needs to be fixed NOW.”

“There’s often 1 staff member for 17 residents. I try to tell the other residents to be patient.”

“You have to have patience. You have to wait for someone to come even if it’s an emergency.”

“The crew works very hard to pick up the slack.”

“Staff need a raise. How many times can I say that? I used to be an aide. Childcare on \$15/hour is not possible. Oh, how stressful.”

“They all need a raise; we need a dependable crew.”

“I’m able to get up so I’m okay. But God bless aides the aides, they’re under stress and it’s hard. Staff is short and it’s stressful. I pray for all the staff members to have help.”

“We’re short all the time but staff tough it out and they try to come to us.”

“We’ve been short-staffed plenty of times. Nurses like [name] will pitch in and help like crazy on those days - she’s always there for me. There are people who work here that are there for us and it’s important that staff are here every single day.”

Residents frequently expressed empathy and sympathy for direct care staff. As shared in the discussion of making a nursing home feel like home, residents consider staff to be their family. Many wished staff had better pay, benefits, and support.

“I call it my power light. Sometimes someone comes in and says I don’t have time so I will come back later and tries to turn off my light. I say the “light stays on”. That’s my power. If you turn the light off then you take away my power. I think the light is your power.”

“I have to do things on my own when there isn’t enough staff.”

Some residents shared what they do when they experience short staffing.

How is your day impacted when there are enough staff?

“It goes a lot easier when there’s enough staff.”

“Makes things run smoother when there’s enough staff.”

Residents were asked about when there are or are not enough staff. Most residents focused on how short staffing impacts their day.

Do you feel like you are part of the community?

“Nursing homes are where the forgotten are. Your family doesn’t love you; you didn’t plan well so you’re here instead of at home with caregivers. People don’t want to look at us because they fear being in this position one day.”

“I did volunteer work in the nursing home before moving in. I had family in nursing homes, they were in private pay nursing homes, so it looked a lot different. I thought nursing homes were all peachy keen and everyone was getting what they needed and then I got here. Now I see people parked in front of the TV all day without hydration.”

“I feel like the [outside] community could do a lot better for the nursing home people. After some time, we feel alone, and we try to check in on each other- especially those without families.”

“I feel forgotten [...] and others should come in and check on us.”

“I don’t feel a part of this community at all. The nursing home is my [only] family and community.”

“No one comes in here to make sure the nursing home is doing what they are supposed to do. We’ve gone years without seeing state [Office of Inspector General].”

60% of residents living in nursing homes do not have any outside visitors (family, friends, or other support groups and networks) that regularly come to see them. Many residents reported that they did not feel like they were a part of the outside community.

“I guess I’m not very important since no one is here, not even the mayor decided to show up.”

“I’m disappointed the Mayor and the City Council none of them showed up today.”

Some residents reported feeling as though local and state leaders were not interested in them and expressed their disappointment that community leadership did not attend or participate in the resident forum.

“Since COVID, people visit less, they act like they’re going to catch something. There’s less freedom of movement. We just recently got our trips and our outings back.”

Residents expressed dislike for COVID precautions and the isolation it caused, such as in-room activities, to reduce the spread.

“It’s easy to feel connected inside the nursing home- we have activities, games, and friends.”

“I get invited into other residents’ rooms- that’s a part of making the nursing home a community.”

“My roommates family took me in as their own. They helped me when they didn’t have to.”

“I love people. This gave me the opportunity to do that- I wake up in the morning and get to be around people.”

“We build our own families here.”

“Church makes me feel part of the community. We have church three times a week at this facility.”

Despite many residents reporting feeling isolated from the outside community, residents sitting on the panels lit up when speaking about how they have built their own communities *inside* the nursing homes.

Having facility staff, roommates, other residents, and other residents' families treat them like family was extremely important and meaningful to residents. Their responses really highlighted the impact of having caring and supportive facility staff because this was critical in fostering meaningful connections and feeling like they were “home.”

Do you feel the activities in your nursing home are meaningful in a physical, mental, and/or psychosocial way?

“Activities are important! Without them I’d be crazy!”

“Activities are really important. If we don’t have activities, we have nothing.”

“I think this [nursing home] is a good place to be because of the activities.”

“Keeping our brains busy with [meaningful] activities is as important as getting medicine.”

Residents were excited to share their thoughts on activities in their nursing homes. As stated above, they feel activities are just as important as medication!

“Staff take us shopping every Monday and Friday; they take whoever wants to go.”

“We’ve tried for 2 years to go fishing, and this year we finally got to go-and guess who caught the 1st fish!? Our activities work constantly to do new things and a lot of community members come in to see us.”

“Dance in the dining room.”

“Watch movies and stuff instead of walking with the wrong crowd.”

“Music, bingo, and physical therapy help you a whole lot.”

“Trips out. We went out and ate at the steakhouse this summer.”

“We went fishing.”

“We went bowling and we have jigsaw puzzles.”

“I like to go into the PT room and cook.”

"We have something called chit chat time and we enjoy each other's company."

"Drawing, art. They give me space to do that."

"I love bingo."

Residents were happy to share their favorite activities. This question garnered the most discussion between residents, many of whom said they would be asking their activities director to try some of the new things they heard about.

"A new owner took over; they used to have a bus that took us out to eat - but now it just sits there."

"I like bingo just as much as anybody, but that's not the only thing I want to do! We need more variety."

"We just got a new bus, but it doesn't hold as many people. The old bus could take four wheelchairs, but this new one only takes one."

"We don't even have a bus. They tell me I can't use the county transportation for anything except medical appointments, so I hardly ever leave the building."

"Activities have very little staff and monetary support. [Activities] are very important and need to be supported."

For some residents, the activities offered fell short. Small budgets, limited transportation, and variety left some residents feeling bored. Younger residents reported feeling less satisfied by the activities held by the facility. Some of the male residents also felt like they did not have very many options catered to their interests.

"[Activity Director] changes activities all the time- she dances for us!"

"Thanks to [Activity Director], she gets us to a lot of activities, and we enjoy almost all of them."

"Activities are fantastic here and [Activity Director] is always on top of things!"

"We have the best Activities Director. We do a lot of different things."

"Shout out to [Activity Director]. He has been there since day one. He can get me to calm down."

"You might have a great Activities Director, but not as good as mine!"

When residents spoke about activities, several wanted to highlight their nursing home's Activity Director(s) and how much those individuals meant to them. As noted in the residents' discussion of making the nursing home feel like home, activities staff play an essential role in day-to-day quality of life.

What would you like to share with the long-term care staff who work in your home?

“I was an aid to nursing home residents. I never thought I’d be one.”

“I’ve seen both sides- worked in healthcare and now I’m a resident.”

Some residents shared their experiences working in long-term care before becoming a resident.

“I didn’t have eyesight for 2 years and [facility staff] helped me. I want to say thank you to them for being there for me.”

“A few years ago, I lost my husband. Shortly after, my son put me in the car and drove me to [the] nursing home, dropped me off and never came back. It’s been two years now. I didn’t realize it then, but staff were holding me- they became my family. The residents are my sisters and brothers now. They know my pain and I know theirs.”

“I appreciate them helping me do the things I can’t.”

“Wonderful job with activities and having different types of activities.”

“Thank you! When I first came here, I wanted to go home, I cried. But I met [a staff person] who sat with me and took time for me.”

Most responses to this question were words of appreciation for staff. Many, many residents called out specific staff for the ways they went above and beyond to support them. For the purposes of this report, specific names have been removed. Many of the staff mentioned attended the forums.

“That we’re humans just like everyone else. Don’t forget about us.”

“Listen. Listen to the quiet resident, she knows what’s going on. People will tell you what makes them happy. Listen to the resident calling out for help because it’s not just a behavior. They need something that is important to them.”

Residents also asked direct care staff to listen to residents when they spoke, even if they were not communicating clearly about their needs. At the core of this question, residents told staff that they wanted to be treated with dignity and like humans.

“Keep doing what you’re doing.”

“I’m really sorry you’re under paid.”

Another theme during this discussion was acknowledging the difficulties direct care staff face in their work. Residents shared stories about noticing direct care staff when they

have a bad day, trying to be patient and calm when asking for care, and recognizing the low pay and difficult work of State Registered Nurse Aides.

How do you think individuals living in a nursing home are viewed?

“People think nursing homes are a place where old people go to die. But I came here to live!”

“People think we’re crazy and we’re not!”

“No one expects to be in a nursing home, but that’s how it is.”

“Sometimes it seems like [others] consider us ‘blobs in a bed’. I’m a poet and I write and one my poems is called Blobs in a Bed.”

Residents were eager to share their opinions on what they thought the public’s opinions were regarding those living in a nursing home.

“I get angry when [facility staff] put my pants on and they are twisted. You feel messy, dirty. Why do people who live in nursing homes have to look like this? They wouldn’t go out of their houses that! Why would [facility staff] send us someplace like that? When [staff] clean us up- clean us up thoroughly. I went to a urologist, and I hadn’t been cleaned up and I smelled bad. It embarrassed me. You wouldn’t walk into an office like that.”

One resident shared her experience going to a medical appointment and how embarrassed she was due to not being properly cleaned and dressed by facility staff. Stories like this help illustrate why nursing homes can have negative public opinions.

What opportunities have you been presented with while living in the nursing home that otherwise may not have been possible?

“I used to be shy, but now I talk all the time, and I sing. I met people that I would have never met!”

“It gave me an opportunity to slow down.”

“I used to be homeless before I came here. Now I am fed three meals a day, I get to have fun, and I have a bed to sleep in.”

“I didn’t get to do anything when I lived at home by myself. I lived at home alone for 17 years! But now I have hobbies, I have friends. I enjoy where I’m at- I’m home.”

“If I wouldn’t have moved into the nursing home, I would have never gotten to do karaoke.”

“I’m just 60 years old. I’m not an old man, I was falling, my health was declining. I told the doctor, ‘I only have one daughter- what can I do?’ I asked him what he thought about me going

to a nursing home for therapy and now, I love it here. When I first moved there, I was really down in the dumps, I gained weight. I want to walk my daughter down the aisle on October 24, 2025, and I'm going to do it. If it weren't for [the nursing home], I wouldn't be able to."

When asked about what opportunities they have had since coming to live at the nursing home, residents expressed gratitude for many things that they might not have otherwise had or been able to do had they not been in a nursing home.

Has privacy been a concern for you while living in the nursing home?

"We only have 2 private rooms [in our nursing home]. I'd rather be in a private room if I could afford it."

"Privacy in rooms would be good if we could all afford it. You can't have it all I guess- but it would be better to have private rooms."

"I would like a private room, and more space. I don't have hardly any room for my things, my clothes. I don't have family who can store things for me when I don't need them, like heavy coats or summer clothes."

"People don't know how small these rooms are. I watch new people move in and they have a pickup truck full of everything but the kitchen sink. There's nowhere for those things to go. I feel bad for them."

This question was only asked in a few of the 20 forums. However, many residents expressed a desire to have their own room.

"There's a privacy issue with not having a private room to yourself. My roommate has memory issues and goes through my clothes."

"We live in half a room. Things don't go that great between roommates. You have to compromise."

"My roommate has family who bring her a lot of things. I feel like I don't have enough room for my own things, there's just no space between our beds, dressers, and wheelchairs."

"Sometimes it's hard to live with a lot of people. I had a roommate that liked to talk and cuss and yell. I couldn't sleep the first couple of nights I was there."

Residents who want a private room often mentioned the frustrations of living with a roommate. Some stories involved a roommate with cognitive impairments or mental illness rummaging through their belongings or even taking their things. Others discussed challenges in sharing such a small space with someone with significant health needs.

"I love having a roommate."

“I’ve been here for 24 years - all the staff, my roommates that’s what makes it home.”

“My roommate’s family took me in as their own. They helped me and they didn’t have to.”

Although most residents did want private rooms, some preferred staying in a room with a roommate. Some residents said they did not want to feel alone, and others said they liked having a friend, and a few mentioned again the fact that they helped keep an eye on their roommate to make sure they get care.

“There are curtains to pull between roommates. The staff try their best [to maintain privacy], but you can still hear and smell things.”

“I think it is important to make sure that facility staff knock before entering our rooms.”

Finally, residents shared the importance of staff in protecting their privacy.

Other Questions

Some District Ombudsman posed additional questions at their forums.

What advice do you have for someone who is entering long-term care?

“You have to face whatever your position is. If you don’t have anyone to take care of you, you have to face the day and be thankful.”

“Go. It’s not a lonely place because there’s always some entertainment.”

“Stay humble. Today it’s us, tomorrow it could be you. I wasn’t always in a wheelchair.”

“Do what they tell you to do and you’ll do just fine. Be patient. They do the best they can.”

“Get to know people.”

Residents in this forum shared advice that largely focused on being prepared to be patient and willing to accept change and help.

“They will treat you nice if you’re nice to them.”

“If you go in with a bad attitude you’re gonna get some of that back.”

Residents also warn prospective residents of the expectation for residents to be nice to staff to avoid retaliation.

Appendix B:

A Roadmap for the KLTCOP

2024 Kentucky Nursing Home Residents' Rights Forum

Roadmap by KLTCOP

Theme: "The Power of My Voice"

Objective: Amplifying resident voices & experiences while promoting the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Dates: Month of October

Locations: One forum in each of the 15 Area Development Districts

Time: 90 minutes of forum

Invite: Nursing home residents, resident family & friends, community, CHFS DAIL staff, State LTC Ombudsman staff, ADD staff, city & county officials, legislators, ombudsman partners (APS, OIG, Guardianship, Senior Centers)

Optional: Serve refreshments, draw for a door prize, provide goodie bags for attendees or participants, invite NHs to set up a table display for attendees to review immediately before or after the forum, stream forum to live audience (e.g. YouTube or Facebook).

LTC Ombudsman Tabling: Have a table at the entryway to promote the LTCO program. Bring brochures, swag, or other publications for attendees to take home. Include a sign-in sheet to capture attendee information (and consent to take photos/stream, if needed).

Sample Agenda

Welcome

Remarks from District Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Remarks from CHFS / DAIL Leadership

Remarks from State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office

Presentation of Proclamation

Resident Forum Panel

1. Each resident introduces themselves and shares their “why” for participating today
2. Suggested Questions for Resident Discussion:
 - a. What does home mean to you? What helps you feel more “at home” in the nursing home?
 - b. How is your voice heard as a resident in a nursing home?
 - c. Do you feel you are part of the community?
 - d. How do you think those living in a nursing home are viewed? What were your personal views of nursing homes before placement? Have those previous views changed?
 - e. Tell me about the activities in your nursing home. Do you feel the activities are meaningful in a physical, mental, and/or psychosocial way?
 - f. What opportunities have you been presented with while living in a nursing home that you feel would not have been possible outside of nursing home placement?
 - g. Do you have control over your daily schedule? Do you feel like you have a lot of choices?
 - h. Has privacy or the lack of privacy been a concern for you while living in the facility? What could be done to improve privacy? Would private rooms help, and if so, why?
 - i. Do you know that you can file a grievance in the nursing home? Do you know how to file a grievance?
 - j. The federal government has passed a minimum staffing law for nursing homes. How is your day impacted when there aren't enough staff working? How is your day impacted when there **are** enough staff working?
 - k. What would you like to share with the staff who work in these facilities?
 - l. Out of everything said today, what is the one thing that you hope people take away from this conversation?

Audience Questions and Comments

Closing Remarks from District Long-Term Care Ombudsman

What to Bring to the Forum

For your Registration Table, be sure to bring:

1. A sign in sheet
 - a. You may consider adding language informing the audience that you will be recording, streaming, or taking photographs.
 - b. You may also want to collect mailing or email addresses to send follow-up information, add to newsletter listings, etc.
2. Pens
3. Name tags
4. Nursing Home Residents' Rights books
5. Photo consent forms for residents
 - a. I always suggest adding some descriptions of the resident so other people can recognize who a resident is in pictures (i.e. what is the person wearing)
6. DLTCO brochures
7. Your business cards
8. Any swag/giveaways
9. Table displays/signs
10. It's always nice to have a few office supplies, too, including:
 - a. Tape
 - b. Scissors
 - c. Sticky notes
11. Goody Bags (if you are giving out goody bags to your participating residents)

For your own comfort, bring a water bottle, wear comfortable shoes, and bring layers in case it's too hot or too cold at the venue!

Roadmap: How to Plan a Resident Forum

1. Identify a date and time for your event. Send a Save the Date to the KSLTCOP, CHFS/DAIL.
 - a. Consider resident mealtimes and activity schedule when picking a time.
 - b. Some ADDs have scheduled their forum immediately after an ADD Advisory Board Meeting to ensure local officials are available.
2. Identify a location and confirm availability.
 - a. Consider free spaces available in your community. ADD spaces, college campuses, community centers, senior centers, recreational halls, churches, nursing homes?
3. Review current CDC guidelines to prepare for the possibility of a participating facility having an outbreak of contagious illness.
 - a. You could also use this as an opportunity to encourage facilities to offer vaccine clinics to residents for flu, COVID, and RSV.
4. [File a request for the Governor's Office](#) to attend and issue Proclamation for Residents' Rights Month (sample proclamation included).
 - a. You can also invite the host city's mayor or county judge to issue a proclamation.
5. Create an invitation or save the date.
 - a. Consider creating an infosheet for facilities and residents to review.
6. Optional: Find or plan refreshments, goodie bags, or exhibitor opportunities.
7. Identify potential nursing homes for participation.
 - a. Consider who has transportation, residents who would participate, staff who could escort residents.
8. Identify potential residents for participation
 - a. Active Resident Council Officers and members may be more interested in participating.
 - b. Consider attending Resident Council Meetings to introduce the resident forum to attendees. Share your Save the Date or an infosheet.
9. Discuss with the nursing home plans for transportation and staff escorts.
10. Invite the community.
 - a. Utilize Advisory Council members by giving them infosheets or invitations to distribute in their community to help advertise the event.
 - b. Attend Family Council meetings to invite families.
 - c. Send invitations to local city/county officials.
 - d. Send invitations to local legislators.
 - e. Send invitation to your ADD, the KSLTCOP, and CHFS/DAIL.
 - f. Invite HOSA Students (high school students planning to be health professionals)
 - g. Invite local or regional media outlets.
 - i. Sample press release included.
11. Prepare residents for the day.

- a. Share your final agenda, including the questions you will be asking.
 - b. Prepare them for the opportunity to introduce themselves on stage / at the event.
 - c. Let residents know the full schedule. Tell them who else may be attending.
 - d. Some residents may want to answer questions with you before the event, like a practice-run.
12. Confirm attendees for Agenda Items:
- a. A KSLTCOP representative to speak on behalf of the KSLTCOP.
 - b. A CHFS/DAIL representative to speak on behalf of CHFS.
 - c. Confirm who will be presenting the Governor's Proclamation of Residents' Rights Month.
13. Confirm details with the event site, staff who are attending, residents & families.

Sample Infosheet for Nursing Homes

Print on your agency's letterhead and include your save the date or invitation.

Dear [Nursing Home Administrator],

To celebrate Residents' Rights Month this October, each District Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is hosting a forum to highlight the Commonwealth's nursing home residents. This forum will be an opportunity for residents to shine, amplifying their voices and experiences.

[DATE], [TIME], [LOCATION]

The forum will include information about the long-term care ombudsman program, remarks by state leaders from CHFS and a proclamation for Residents' Rights Month, and a question-and-answer discussion for residents to share their perspectives. The doors will open at [TIME] with the welcoming scheduled to begin at [TIME]. We expect the event to last [90 MINUTES] with doors closing at [TIME].

We are inviting [OTHER NURSING HOMES], [RESIDENT FAMILIES], [ADD STAFF], [LOCAL OMBUDSMAN STAFF], [LOCAL CITY/COUNTY OFFICIALS], [LOCAL LEGISLATORS], [OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS] to attend[, and hope to stream the event to allow families to watch].

[Include information about any snacks or goodie bags. Include information if you are having nursing homes bring a table display for attendees to review.

We are excited to include you and your residents at this event and hope we can arrange for their attendance!

Enclosed is the Save the Date flyer and a copy of the information I will share with residents who are interested in participating in the discussion or listening in the audience.

Sincerely,

District Ombudsman

PS- Why should a nursing home participate in Residents' Rights Month events like these?

1. Educate your staff on residents' rights
2. Build relationships with residents, families, and staff
3. Promote community involvement in long-term care
4. Increase community awareness of residents' rights
5. Highlight your dedication to promoting residents' rights and person-centered care.

Sample Infosheet for Nursing Home Residents (also share the invite/Save the Date)

Print on your agency's letterhead and include your save the date or invitation.

Dear [Nursing Home Resident],

To celebrate Residents' Rights Month this October, your District Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is hosting a forum to highlight our community's nursing home residents. This forum will be an opportunity for you to shine, amplifying your voice and experiences.

The forum will include information about the long-term care ombudsman program, remarks by state leaders from CHFS and a proclamation for Residents' Rights Month, and a question-and-answer discussion for you to share your perspectives.

The doors will open at [TIME] with the welcoming scheduled to begin at [TIME]. We expect the event to last [90 MINUTES] with doors closing at [TIME].

We are inviting [OTHER NURSING HOMES], [RESIDENT FAMILIES], [ADD STAFF], [LOCAL OMBUDSMAN STAFF], [LOCAL CITY/COUNTY OFFICIALS], [LOCAL LEGISLATORS], [OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS] to attend and hear your stories. We also hope to stream the event to allow your family and friends to watch.

[Include information about any refreshments/snacks or goodie bags.]

Some of the questions you could be asked as a participant include:

3. What does home mean to you? What helps you feel more "at home" in the nursing home?
4. How is your voice heard as a resident in a nursing home?
5. Do you feel you are part of the community?
6. How do you think those living in a nursing home are viewed? What were your personal views of nursing homes before placement? Have those previous views changed?
7. Tell me about the activities in your nursing home. Do you feel the activities are meaningful in a physical, mental, and/or psychosocial way?
8. What opportunities have you been presented with while living in a nursing home that you feel would not have been possible outside of nursing home placement?
9. Do you have control over your daily schedule? Do you feel like you have a lot of choices?
10. Has privacy or the lack of privacy been a concern for you while living in the facility? What could be done to improve privacy? Would private rooms help, and if so, why?
11. Do you know that you can file a grievance in the nursing home? Do you know how to file a grievance?

12. The federal government has passed a minimum staffing law for nursing homes. How is your day impacted when there aren't enough staff working? How is your day impacted when there **are** enough staff working?
13. What would you like to share with the staff who work in these facilities?
14. Out of everything said today, what is the one thing that you hope people take away from this conversation?

We are excited to include you at this event and hope you will participate in the forum!

Sincerely,

District Ombudsman

Sample Welcoming Remarks from District Ombudsman

Welcome to the [ADD NAME] District Nursing Home Resident Forum! We are so happy to see you here for this spotlight on our [ADD/County/Area] nursing home residents.

My name is [NAME] and I am the District Ombudsman for the [##] counties in the [NAME] Area Development District. I am an advocate for the residents in our nursing homes, personal care homes, family care homes, and assisted living communities. I visit residents, share information about long-term care, and help residents when they have problems in their home.

This forum is part of the [DLTCOP NAME]'s celebration of Residents' Rights Month, which honors residents living in all long-term care facilities. It is an opportunity to focus on and celebrate the dignity and rights of every individual receiving long-term care services.

As the District Ombudsman, it's my job to make sure that residents know their rights, how to exercise them, and what to do if they need help to exercise them. All residents have the right to self-determination and to use their voice to make their own choices.

This year's Residents' Rights Month theme, **The Power of My Voice**, emphasizes self-empowerment and recognizes the power of residents being vocal about their interests, personal growth, and right to live full, enriching lives.

[If you need to cover any "housekeeping" topics, insert them here (like where the bathrooms are, what time the forum will wrap up, if you have a door prize or something to give away)]

I am pleased to introduce you to our next guest, [NAME] from the Kentucky State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

Sample Closing Remarks from District Ombudsman

Thank you all so much for attending the [ADD NAME] District Nursing Home Resident Forum! It has been our pleasure to have you here, and we hope you have enjoyed hearing directly from our community's nursing home residents about their experiences and lives.

If you feel called to learn more or volunteer with the long-term care ombudsman program, please get in touch with me! I would love to help you get involved in strengthening the community's relationships with our nursing home residents.

Please be sure to grab a brochure [or goodie bag, or snack] before you leave! We will be here until [TIME DOORS CLOSE] to answer individual questions or share additional resources.

Thank you again!

Sample Proclamation: Mayor

This sample comes from the National Consumer Voice. You can edit it to list only the residents in the city or county.

National Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month 2024 Proclamation

The Power of My Voice

Whereas, there are 1.3 million individuals living in 15,600 nursing homes; and over 800,000 individuals living in 28,900 assisted living/residential care facilities in the U.S.; and

Whereas, the federal Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987 guarantees residents their individual rights in order to promote and maintain their dignity and autonomy; and

Whereas, all residents should be aware of their rights so they may be empowered to live with dignity and self-determination; and

Whereas, we wish to honor and celebrate these citizens, to recognize their rich individuality, and to reaffirm their right to vote and participate politically, including the right to have a say in their care; and

Whereas, individuals and groups across the country will be celebrating Residents' Rights Month with the theme – “**The Power of My Voice**”– emphasizing residents' right to self-determination and to use their voice to make their own choices.

Now, therefore, I, _____, Mayor of the City of _____, do hereby proclaim October 2024 as **National Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month**, in the City of _____, and encourage all citizens to join me in these important observances.

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2024

_____, Mayor

Sample Proclamation: Governor

This sample comes from the National Consumer Voice. You can edit it to list only the residents in Kentucky.

National Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month 2024 Proclamation

The Power of My Voice

Whereas, there are 1.3 million individuals living in 15,600 nursing homes; and over 800,000 individuals living in 28,900 assisted living/residential care facilities in the U.S.; and

Whereas, the federal Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987 guarantees residents their individual rights in order to promote and maintain their dignity and autonomy; and

Whereas, all residents should be aware of their rights so they may be empowered to live with dignity and self-determination; and

Whereas, we wish to honor and celebrate these citizens, to recognize their rich individuality, and reaffirm their right to vote and participate politically, including the right to have a say in their care; and

Whereas, individuals and groups across the country will be celebrating Residents' Rights Month with the theme – “**The Power of My Voice**” – emphasizing residents' right to self-determination and to use their voice to make their own choices.

Now, therefore, I, _____, Governor of the State of _____, do hereby proclaim October 2024 as **National Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month**, in the State of _____, and encourage all citizens to join me in these important observances.

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2024

_____, Governor

Sample Press Release:

This Press Release comes from the National Consumer Voice. Insert details about your event, add a quote from the DLTCO, and specific information for your ADD/community.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

<DATE>

CONTACT:

<NAME/PHONE/E-MAIL>

Long-term Care Residents Honored During Residents' Rights Month, October 2024

Insert your town- Across the country, residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities along with family members, Ombudsman program representatives, citizen advocates, facility staff, and others will honor the individual rights of long-term care residents by celebrating Residents' Rights Month. Residents' Rights Month is an annual event held in October by the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) to celebrate and focus on awareness of dignity, respect, and the value of long-term care residents. Residents have the right to self-determination and to use their voice to make their own choices. This year's Residents' Rights Month theme, **The Power of My Voice**, emphasizes self-empowerment and recognizes the power of residents being vocal about their interests, personal growth, and right to live full, enriching lives.

"Residents' voices are the most important at the decision-making table. This year's Residents' Rights Month theme empowers residents to raise their voices to express their likes and dislikes and fervently pursue the life they want to live," said Lori Smetanka, Executive Director of Consumer Voice.

<Insert details about any local events including when, where, and why the event is being held. Highlight any proclamation by an elected official >

The Nursing Home Reform Law, passed in 1987, guarantees nursing home residents their individual rights, including but not limited to: individualized care, respect, dignity, the right to visitation, the right to privacy, the right to complain, and the right to make independent choices. Residents who have made their home in other types of facilities

<INSERT NAMES OF OTHER TYPES OF FACILITIES IN YOUR STATE, i.e. assisted living, adult care homes>

maintain their rights as U.S. Citizens. Residents' Rights Month raises awareness about these rights and pays tribute to the unique contributions of long-term residents.

The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has worked for nearly 50 years to promote residents' rights daily. More than 4,200 volunteers and 1,400 paid staff are advocates for residents in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Authorized under the Older Americans Act and administered by the Administration on Aging, the program also provides information on how to find a facility, conducts community education sessions, and supports residents, their families, and the public with one-on-one consultation regarding long-term care.

<INSERT DETAILS ABOUT STATE OR LOCAL OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM HERE.>

<INSERT QUOTE FROM LOCAL OR STATE OMBUDSMAN OR CITIZEN ADVOCACY GROUP>

2024 Residents' Rights Month Logo:



<https://theconsumervoice.org/events/2024-residents-rights-month>

Appendix C:

Memo from the Department of Aging and
Independent Living



Andy Beshear
GOVERNOR


CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
Department For Aging and Independent Living
Office Of the Commissioner

275 East Main Street, 3E-E
Frankfort, Kentucky 40621
Phone: (502) 564-6930
Fax: (502) 564-4595

Eric Friedlander
SECRETARY

Victoria L. Elridge
COMMISSIONER

TO: Area Agencies on Aging and Independent Living
Kentucky Long-Term Care Ombudsman

FROM: Victoria Elridge, Commissioner 

DATE: August 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Resident Rights Forum

DAIL would like to provide more information on the *how, where, when, and why's* for the Resident Rights forums. Having a coordinated approach from all the Area Agencies on Aging and Independent Living, Long-Term Care Ombudsman and DAIL will allow for a great experience for all of our nursing facilities and their residents. Of course, with October being resident's rights month, there is no better time to celebrate and spotlight the community of nursing home care residents. Please make each forum about the resident. Let the audience listen to their stories of living in the nursing facilities, with all the questions pertaining to and focused on the resident, simplicity is always a great way to share.

All forums will need to all be conducted in the month of October, and they will need to be in person. Consider local libraries, community centers, senior centers, or technical schools as places to share with the community. The agenda for the forum will need to consist of welcome remarks from the District LTC Ombudsman or a Council member, remarks from state leaders for the presentation of the Proclamation, and the 2023 video Buffalo Trace produced for the inaugural forum. The remaining portion of the forum should be formatted to allow for residents to tell their story and their experience in a long-term care setting. It is suggested that a representative group of the community be on stage along with a moderator who can facilitate the discussions with the residents. It is suggested that the forums are kept to 90 minutes.

DAIL will forward the "SAVE THE DATE" that allows for customization for the local forms. Each agency can add the important details such as logo, date, time and location as well as add social media or advertising of your choice. Local community partners, elected officials, veterans' organizations, etc. should be considered for your invitation list. When planning the event, you will also need to ensure that

Resident Rights Forums

there is transportation for the nursing residents to get to and from the forum. If funding is needed for the forums, it would be an appropriate use of the state LTCO funding that your agency has received but DAIL asks that you are mindful in your expenses for the forums and limit your expenses to \$XXXXX.

Once the date, time and place are established please forward to DAIL contact Chris McGlone Christie.McGlone@ky.gov, and Edward Clark EdwardC.Clark@ky.gov. Once again this is a very exciting time to showcase your nursing home residents. If you have questions or need additional support, please let DAIL know.

Appendix D:

Sample Save the Date Form Shared by
Department of Aging and Independent
Living



Resident FORUM

IN RECOGNITION OF RESIDENT RIGHTS MONTH



JOIN US TO CELEBRATE A COMMUNITY OF NURSING HOME CARE RESIDENTS COMING TOGETHER TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD. LISTEN AS THEY TAKE THE STAGE TO DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND SHARE THEIR STORIES.

We challenge you to consider your own views, open your mind and perhaps change the narrative of long-term care.



Appendix E:

Proclamation of Residents' Rights Month by
Governor Andy Beshear

Proclamation

by

Andy Beshear
Governor

of the

Commonwealth of Kentucky



To All To Whom These Presents Shall Come:

- WHEREAS, There are 1.3 million individuals living in 15,600 nursing homes and over 800,000 individuals living in 28,900 assisted living/residential care facilities in the U.S; and
- WHEREAS, There are over 40,000 Kentuckians living in long-term care communities including but not limited to nursing homes, personal care homes, assisted living communities, and intermediate care facilities; and
- WHEREAS, The federal Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987 guarantees residents their individual rights in order to promote and maintain their dignity and autonomy; and
- WHEREAS, All residents should be aware of their rights so they may be empowered to live with dignity and self-determination; and
- WHEREAS, We wish to honor and celebrate these citizens, to recognize their rich individuality, and reaffirm their right to vote and participate politically, including the right to have a say in their care; and
- WHEREAS, Individuals and groups across the country will be celebrating Residents' Rights Month with the theme "The Power of My Voice"-emphasizing self-empowerment and recognizing the power of residents being vocal about their interests, personal growth, and right to live full, enriching lives;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANDY BESHEAR, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, do hereby proclaim October 2024, as

LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS' RIGHTS MONTH

in Kentucky.



DONE AT THE CAPITOL, in the City of Frankfort the 20th day of September, in the year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Four and in the 233rd year of the Commonwealth.

Andy Beshear
ANDY BESHEAR
GOVERNOR

Michael G. Adams
Michael G. Adams
Secretary of State