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Ombudsman for Long-Term Care News Release - Ombudsman volunteers needed to advocate for rights of Minnesotans living in nursing homes



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For media inquiries only

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Ombudsman volunteers needed to advocate for rights of Minnesotans living in nursing homes

Residents' Rights Month to focus on finding essential volunteers

Minnesotans are being called upon to make a difference in the lives of long-term care residents through volunteerism this October, as the state recognizes Residents' Rights Month.

This year's theme is "Amplify Our Voices," emphasizing a community of long-term care residents coming together to make their voices heard. Minnesotans living in nursing homes need people who have the power to advocate for their rights and make a difference. The focus of the month is empowering residents living in long-term care facilities to speak up for their rights and advocating for those who want help in doing so.

Nursing home residents often face challenges that can compromise their health, well-being, and quality of life. In many cases, they can't advocate for themselves. This is where concerned citizens can step in as ombudsman volunteers and help amplify their voices.

"We're talking about vulnerable people who often have difficulty being heard," says Cheryl Hennen, the State Ombudsman for Long-Term Care. "It takes all of us to amplify their voices and make sure their rights are protected. Certified Ombudsman Volunteers can be a critical link to these protections, but we need more volunteers than we have."

Minnesota has had a significant shortage of ombudsman volunteers since the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ombudsman's Office of Long-Term Care is encouraging Minnesotans to consider volunteering and championing the rights of long-term care residents.

Certified Ombudsman Volunteers are critical to the systems that protect the safety and well-being of thousands of nursing home and assisted living residents in Minnesota. Ombudsman volunteers educate residents on their rights while working with paid regional ombudsman to ensure the rights of those living in long-term care. Currently, only 23 of the nearly 2,500 long-term care facilities in Minnesota have ombudsman volunteers.

Many people living in long-term care facilities and their families don't know that long-term care facility residents have rights and protections.

In addition to the rights of a citizen, nursing home residents also have rights to individualized care, to make independent choices, to be treated with respect and dignity, to visitation, to their personal and medical records, to privacy, to freedom from physical or chemical restraints, and to voice complaints without discrimination, retaliation or the fear of it. The rights can be as simple as a resident being able to shower in the evening rather than at the break of dawn, or as crucial as being free from abuse or neglect.

Ombudsman volunteers are needed all over Minnesota, with the greatest needs in these cities:

- Minneapolis
- St. Paul

- Duluth
- Rochester
- Alexandria
- Apple Valley
- Breckenridge
- Chatfield
- Dawson
- Detroit Lakes
- Eveleth
- Faribault
- Grand Rapids
- International Falls
- Luverne
- Madison
- Moorhead
- Northfield
- Owatonna
- Red Wing
- Roseville
- Spring Valley
- Two Harbors
- Virginia
- Willmar
- Wabasso
- Waseca
- West St. Paul
- Wheaton
- Winona
- Worthington

If you are interested in becoming a Certified Ombudsman Volunteer, visit <https://mn.gov/ooltc/volunteerwithus> for more information.

Details on the rights of long-term care residents are available at <https://mn.gov/ooltc/residentandfamilyresources/>.

To contact the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care with any residents' rights concerns, visit <https://mn.gov/ooltc/contactus/>. You may also find more information on the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care at <https://mn.gov/ooltc/>. The Ombudsman's office provides free confidential advocacy services.

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