Table Top Exercise

Synchronicity among Local and State Ombudsmen

#1. Budget advocacy
A local program is at risk of budget cuts. $60,000.00 is slated for cutbacks by the county government from an urban area ombudsman program. The county funding has been granted for the last 12 years and funds a significant portion of a staff ombudsman position. The state contracts for ombudsman services through area agencies on aging. A public hearing about proposed budget cuts is scheduled in 3 weeks.

What activities/roles seem appropriate to advocate for budget restoration by the state and local ombudsmen?

How can the local and state ombudsmen synchronize their advocacy (communicate and coordinate their message) on this issue?

#2. Public testimony
The state unit on aging, which houses the state ombudsman program, decides to host an Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization listening forum. The state forum will be modeled after similar forums organized by the Administration on Aging. All state and local ombudsmen are employees of the state unit on aging. A local ombudsman would like to testify about the need for mental health ombudsmen.

What are some strategies for the local and state ombudsmen to align their messages for this opportunity to testify?

What are some options for maintaining a unified message if the state ombudsman does not perceive the need for mental health ombudsmen as a priority issue?

#3. Newsletters
A local program has a long-standing tradition of publishing a monthly newsletter to its volunteers and the long-term care provider community. The state ombudsman announces the state office will begin issuing a statewide newsletter for volunteers. A local ombudsman is concerned about how to coordinate the two newsletters and contacts the state ombudsman. Other local ombudsman programs in the state also create and distribute their own newsletters.

What are some opportunities this situation creates for the local and state programs and how would you execute the opportunities in a coordinated way?

#4. Complaint against a local ombudsman
A state ombudsman receives a call from an administrator alleging a local ombudsman referred people to a nursing home in return for payment. The local ombudsman is a volunteer with 15 years of service to the program. The local staff ombudsman was hired 2 months ago and is responsible for training and supervising volunteers in her program within a AAA. The administrator provides considerable facts to support her story.

How can the state ombudsman initially respond to the administrator without undermining the local staff ombudsman's role?

Describe a strategy for investigating and responding to this complaint with the state and local ombudsmen both involved.

#5. Media inquiry
A local ombudsman is called by a reporter who is writing an expose on the state licensing and certification agency. The reporter requests the ombudsman's help in planning undercover visits to several nursing homes. The ombudsman feels this story could affect positive change, but has concerns about possible fallout from her involvement. She calls the state ombudsman, who works for the same agency as licensing and certification, for advice.

What are the issues most important to focus on with this opportunity?

How can the state and local ombudsmen work in sync on this inquiry?

#6. Volunteer recruitment campaign
In an effort to bring volunteers into the state's long-term care ombudsman program, a state ombudsman wants to initiate a volunteer recruitment campaign. Local ombudsmen are overwhelmed with case work and other ombudsman activities, but are in favor of this endeavor.

In what ways would you recommend the local ombudsmen contribute to the development of a campaign?

Designing a volunteer component to the statewide program is a complex task. What considerations about the roles of the local and state ombudsmen are most important in the design and execution of a volunteer program?