



Encouraging Residents' Rights to Vote (for Ombudsmen)

Voter turnout among institutionalized populations is much lower than among non-institutionalized populations. Ombudsman programs across the nation are involved in encouraging and facilitating residents of long-term care facilities to vote. A 2008 survey found that 47% of all state and local ombudsman programs were involved in at least one activity related to voting rights. The survey results show that many ombudsman programs are making an effort to address this issue, but there are still opportunities for greater involvement among ombudsman programs across the country.

"It is imperative that ombudsmen emphasize the importance of voting to residents and staff of LTC facilities. It is a right and empowers the residents, who sometimes feel they are no longer part of the world. Voting helps to preserve dignity and keep residents engaged in life, which I feel is essential to survival" – LTC Ombudsman

Tips for Encouraging Residents' Rights to Vote:

- LTC Ombudsmen can help residents obtain voter registration forms and can help residents request absentee ballots.
- LTC Ombudsmen can help residents fill out the required forms for voting.
- LTC Ombudsmen programs can train facility staff on registration and voting.
- LTC Ombudsmen can work with the facility to help residents vote in person either by providing transport to a polling place, facilitating mobile polling or becoming a registered polling place.
- LTC Ombudsmen can coordinate information sessions for residents about the voting process.
- LTC Ombudsmen can coordinate candidate visits to the facility.
- LTC Ombudsmen can take special care to help residents with cognitive impairments.

LTC Ombudsmen can encourage facilities to do any or all of the above and also encourage political participation by some indirect activities:

- LTC Ombudsmen can create and distribute voter guides, brochures and other educational materials about voting rights. View examples of brochures and voter guides on the Consumer Voice website: [Harris County Resident Voter Guide](#) and [H-GAC Voting Brochure](#).
- LTC Ombudsmen can remind facility staff and residents about the proximity of important deadlines like the last day of registration and the last day to request an absentee ballot.
- For more information about supporting voting rights and activities, go to www.theconsumervice.org.

National Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month will be celebrated in October 2012. Mark your calendars and plan to celebrate! Information and materials for Residents' Rights Month celebrations will be available on the Consumer Voice website at www.theconsumervice.org

Direct questions to: info@theconsumervice.org or 202-332-2275