

Residents' Right to Vote and Ombudsman Program Advocacy

As advocates, Ombudsman programs support all residents' right to vote and advocate on behalf of residents to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in the electoral process.

Federal nursing home regulations ensure residents have the same rights as any other citizen or resident in the United States. This includes the right to vote.

§483.10(b) Exercise of Rights. The resident has the right to exercise his or her rights as a resident of the facility and as a citizen or resident of the United States.

§483.10(b)(1) The facility must ensure that the resident can exercise his or her rights without interference, coercion, discrimination, or reprisal from the facility.

§483.10(b)(2) The resident has the right to be free of interference, coercion, discrimination, and reprisal from the facility in exercising his or her rights and to be supported by the facility in the exercise of his or her rights as required under this subpart.

Examples of how Ombudsman programs can support residents' right to vote:

- Discuss residents' rights, including the right to vote, with residents, facility staff, and family members.
- Identify the appropriate staff person who will lead this effort.
- Provide information about the voting process such as when to register, how to register, how to request an absentee ballot, how to locate accessible polling places, how to find transportation to polling sites, and how to connect with outside organizations that could assist residents directly.
- Remind facility staff about their responsibility to assist residents in exercising their right to vote including finding transportation to polling sites or identifying other ways residents can cast their ballot (e.g., mobile polling, becoming a polling site).

"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

- Create and distribute educational materials about voting rights. View examples of educational materials and activities on the NORC Voting page - <http://ltcombudsman.org/issues/voting>.
- Encourage resident councils to invite candidates to their meetings to speak and visit with residents.
- Investigate complaints regarding residents' rights and access to information, including the right to vote. For more information about supporting voting rights and activities, view Consumer Voice's information on Voting Rights - <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/voting-rights>.

