



STATE OF WISCONSIN
BOARD ON AGING AND LONG TERM CARE

Post Office 180
Kenosha, WI 53141
(262) 654-4952
Fax (262) 654-6194
Ombudsman Helpline 1-800 815-0015
<http://longtermcare.state.wi.us>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Eva Arnold
Rose Boron
Patricia A. Finder-Stone
Terry Lynch
Tanya L. Meyer
Dale B. Taylor
Barbara Thoni

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heather A. Bruemmer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

30 January 2008
CONTACT: Long Term Care
Ombudsman Program
(800) 815-0015

Advocacy in Nursing Home Closures

There have been 5 voluntary closures of Wisconsin nursing homes since September, 2006, that have involved the relocation of over 200 residents. Most of these facilities have identified financial difficulties as the reason for deciding to close. The resulting situation can be stressful for the nursing home residents who have no control over the decision to move and a relatively short period of time to make their choice for other living arrangements. There are often only a limited number of suitable places nearby due to a lack of space or bed availability. Sometimes, an alternative facility will not accept the funding sources that are available to cover the cost of the resident's care. Proximity to family and friends as well as having a connection to a neighborhood or community is frequently identified as being the most important factor in choosing a new home.

The resident and his or her family are not alone in the search to find some other place to live, though. The closing facility is responsible for actively assisting the resident to move. The state has a role in monitoring the process and for assisting the residents in moving, along with the county human services agencies. These agencies make up a relocation team that usually meets on a weekly basis with the closing nursing home to review the developing relocation plans of each person living in the home.

The resident benefits by having representation in this process and long term care ombudsmen from the Board on Aging and Long Term Care participate in these meetings to advocate on her or his behalf. With the resident's input and authorization, an ombudsman can urge the team to fully consider and accommodate the her or his preferences. We can monitor to see that residents are given informed choices that include opportunities to visit proposed alternate living arrangements, and that their rights are protected. An ombudsman can consult with and provide information to the resident on a number of topics not limited to kinds of service options, public funding, and rights of nursing home residents. With her or his consent, we can accompany the resident to planning sessions to support and to provide advice. We can also assist in resolving care concerns or problems with her or his relocation plan.

The Board on Aging and Long Term Care has created a project position to assist the Ombudsman Program in meeting the advocacy needs of residents and their families as they prepare to move from a closing facility. This Relocation Ombudsman Specialist is assigned, statewide, to work only in closing nursing homes to increase the public's access to the program's services.

The Ombudsman program has written information about the resident's rights in a facility closure and a discharge planning guidebook is available. These publications can be found online at the Board on Aging and Long Term Care's website at longtermcare.state.wi.us or can be sent to you free of charge by contacting an ombudsman at (800) 815-0015. Please contact the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program if you have questions or if you want to discuss concerns relating to the closure of a nursing home or the relocation of its residents.

By: Tom La Duke,
Relocation Ombudsman Specialist