



SFY2027 Vermont Ombudsman Program Appropriation Request

What is the Vermont Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program?

The Vermont Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (VOP), established under 33 V.S.A. §7502, advocates for the rights and welfare of Vermonters who receive long-term care. Certified Ombudsmen assess conditions and resolve residents' complaints in over 130 Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, and Residential Care Homes across Vermont. Our Ombudsmen also advocate for Choices for Care Medicaid recipients who receive long-term care in the community, and they engage in systemic advocacy. Our work prevents harm and restores vulnerable adults' quality of life.

What is the VOP's current staffing?

The VOP employs eight total staff members: six Local Ombudsmen serve in communities across the state, one Ombudsman manages the state-wide helpline, and a State Long-Term Care Ombudsman manages staff and leads systemic advocacy.

What is the current state of the VOP's funding?

Since FY2024, the VOP's base funding has been flat at \$1,081,673. Between 2020 and 2023, we received \$382,736 in one-time funds from the federal government. These funds have offset inflationary pressures, but we will exhaust them in 2026. We received one increase in base funding in the last five years which was implemented in FY2024, consisting of \$137,344 in state general funds and \$132,766 in Medicaid match funds.

How much additional funding does the VOP need to maintain its current work?

A **\$275,000** increase to the VOP's base funding is necessary to maintain our current staffing levels beyond FY2026.

What is an example of the VOP's work?

A developmentally disabled, elderly man who lives in a nursing facility in Vermont had been waiting over two years for a cataract operation. He was nearly blind. The Local Ombudsman arranged a care plan meeting and compelled the facility's social worker to set the appointments. He ultimately had the surgery after nearly three years of waiting. The client's friend called the Ombudsman and stated, "He's ecstatic. He keeps looking at his hands, because he doesn't recognize them. He forgot what they look like. He's looking at his hands and explaining how wonderful it is. You were instrumental in that, and I can't thank you and he can't thank you enough for the work you are doing."