



How Long-Term Care Ombudsmen Serve Vermonters

Vermont Long-Term Care Ombudsmen protect rights, restore dignity, and ensure appropriate care for some of the most vulnerable Vermonters. Here are some examples of their work from FY2025:

Helping residents access essential care and dignity: A visually impaired woman was placed in the dementia care unit despite not having dementia, leaving her isolated and depressed. Nursing assistants entered her room without speaking to her, touched her without warning, and engaged in social conversations with other staff while providing care. In addition, her son repeatedly found her oxygen tank disconnected, even though she was unable to detach it herself. She was also left for hours in a urine-soaked nightgown and abandoned on the commode for long periods.

The Local Ombudsman worked with the administrator to educate staff on person-centered care and improve personal care practices. The woman was moved out of the dementia unit and began participating in activities such as music and spending time outdoors. She now reports feeling less alone and more empowered to ask for help.

Preventing involuntary evictions: A woman received a discharge notice from her long-term care home for non-payment and non-compliance, because she had not enrolled in Long-Term Care Medicaid (LTCM) and she could not afford to pay. The woman's family member who is also her power of attorney needed assistance to complete the LTCM paperwork.

The Local Ombudsman appealed the discharge notice and reached out to the family member. The Local Ombudsman then assisted the family member to gather the required documents and facilitated a meeting between the family member and the LTCM worker. The woman's LTCM application was re-opened, and the home rescinded the discharge notice.



The woman was ultimately approved for LTCM, and she continues to live in her care home.

Advocating for Vermonters who cannot advocate for themselves: A hospice nurse contacted the ombudsman program to report that a nursing facility was failing to adequately manage pain for residents on hospice care. The nurse observed residents who were actively dying and in pain, while facility staff refused to follow hospice orders for pain management. Although hospice had prescribed pain medication every fifteen minutes, staff claimed that corporate policy limited all medication administrations to no more than 24 doses in a 24-hour period.

The Local Ombudsman intervened to ensure residents' pain was properly addressed. As a result, the facility agreed to follow hospice orders for end-of-life comfort care.

Addressing Residents' needs to access supports outside of long-term care facilities: A man called the Local Ombudsman to complain that he has been unable to attend his dance therapy class for Parkinson's Disease which he has been attending for many years. He had recently moved to a long-term care facility, and the facility was unwilling to transport him to the therapy.

The Local Ombudsman met with the man who expressed the profound importance that this therapy has had in his life. The Local Ombudsman contacted the facility social worker, the resident's Power of Attorney, and the class instructor to explore transportation options. Consequently, an SSTA application was submitted and approved, and the man resumed attending the class. The man attributes his participation in the dance troupe as the best medicine for his movement disorder and a source of intense joy and camaraderie.