A Message From the Secretary

It has been a wonderful year at the Department of Elder Affairs, where we are tasked with the immense responsibility of caring for Florida’s more than 4.9 million elders. Working together, we have accomplished a great deal through strengthened partnerships and the creation of new ones. I am excited for where we are and where will be in the new year. It is our mission to serve elders as they live, contribute, and build legacies in Florida. We simply could not accomplish this without the dedication of volunteers who make a difference every day in the lives of elder Floridians. We are grateful for those who graciously give their time in service to benefit others, meeting their needs and improving the communities in which they live.

In a fast moving world, it can be easy for us to get tunnel vision and remain focused on the things going on immediately around us. In that noise, it is easy to forget that we are a part of something bigger. That is not true of the volunteers of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP). Their noble work is critical to accomplishing our goals to protect Florida seniors. LTCOP is made up of dedicated staff and volunteers whose mission it is to protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of those residing in long-term care facilities through a collaborative resident-centered advocacy program.

Each year, ombudsmen and staff visit more than 4,000 assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and adult family care homes to spend time with residents and families, discuss their experiences, and hear any concerns. Oftentimes, ombudsmen become the voices of the residents who may not have family or friends to assist them. Our latest numbers show that volunteer ombudsmen donated 86,000 hours for the 2014-2015 Federal Fiscal Year. We are proud of their contributions to long-term care residents, and we are always seeking to increase the volunteer corps. With more volunteers, the program will have an even higher frequency of visitations, which ensures even better outcomes for long-term care residents in Florida.

There is a saying that “there is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer”. Volunteer ombudsmen with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program prove this to be true. I could not be more proud to stand with the staff and volunteers of this program. Their commitment and dedication is inspiring, and I thank them on behalf of the Department of Elder Affairs.

Department of Elder Affairs Secretary Samuel P. Verghese
A Message From the State Ombudsman

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program consistently empowers long-term care residents to know their rights and often provides a voice for those who may not be able to speak up for themselves. Each year, hundreds of volunteers advocate for residents’ rights by devoting their time and energy to successfully resolve the concerns of residents and their loved ones in addition to performing annual assessments in all of Florida’s long-term care facilities.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program’s State Council is comprised solely of volunteers and serves as an advisory body to assist the State Ombudsman in reaching a consensus among local councils on issues affecting residents and impacting the optimal operation of the program. The recommendations from the State Council for 2015-2016 FFY are as follows:

• Additional spending to allow the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to focus on recruiting, retention, and recognition issues;
• Increasing the dollar amount for the Optional State Supplementation Allowance, which is provided to assisted living facility residents;
• Implementing an appeals process for residents discharged from assisted living facilities to ensure that residents are not discharged in retaliation;
• Updating the technology available to ombudsmen to operate during the course of their complaint investigations and training the ombudsmen and staff to be able to properly utilize that technology; and
• Updating the current complaint form to make it accessible to ombudsmen that utilize Macs.

We are proud to be a unique program whose success depends on the commitment, courage, and compassion of volunteers. Ombudsmen are the cornerstone of our program, and I am humbled to work alongside these amazing individuals as we serve Florida’s most vulnerable seniors.

State Ombudsman Leigh Davis

A Message From the Office of the Deputy State Ombudsman for Legal Affairs

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is charged with recommending policy and regulatory changes designed to improve the quality of life of residents of long-term care facilities. As part of this function, the LTCOP is pleased to announce the passage of CS/SB 7018 at the conclusion of the 2015 legislative session. This bill revises part I of chapter 400, Florida Statutes, to:

• Provide the State Ombudsman with final authority to appoint district ombudsmen;
• Revise the duties of and the appointment process for at-large positions to the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council;
• Revise and clarify the application and training requirements for appointment as an ombudsman, including a level 2 background screening;
• Expand the duties of ombudsmen in the local districts to comply with the Older Americans Act, to include the authority to establish resident and family councils within long-term care facilities;
• Clarify that the complaint investigation process and the administrative assessment process are separate processes;
• Conform the complaint investigation and resolution processes with the requirements of the Older Americans Act; and
• Require information to be provided to a resident of a long-term care facility upon first entering the facility to confirm that retaliatory action against a resident for filing a grievance or exercising a resident’s rights is prohibited.

The passage of this bill furthers the mission of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and offers continued improvements for the health, safety, welfare, and rights of Florida’s long-term care residents. It is an honor to serve on behalf of our residents, and I look forward to continued successes on their behalf in the upcoming year.

Deputy State Ombudsman for Legal Affairs Eric Neiberger
Florida’s Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program achieved new milestones in success during the past year. Listed here are some of the highlights and accomplishments that our dedicated staff and volunteers achieved in FFY 2014-2015.

### Year In Review

- When a complaint is closed, a disposition code is assigned based on the resident’s perspective, e.g., resolved, partially resolved, no action needed, withdrawn, not resolved, or referred. Although complaint investigations may result in any one of these codes, the ombudsman strives to advocate for the resident to resolve each complaint to the resident’s satisfaction by working with facility staff members, family members, or other agencies on the resident’s behalf. However, some complaints require a referral to another agency.

### Top 5 Complaints in Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs) and Adult Family-Care Homes

1. Menu
2. Medication - administration, organization
3. Dignity, respect - staff attitudes
4. Cleanliness, pests, general housekeeping
5. Equipment/buildings

### Top 5 Complaints in Nursing Homes

1. Dignity, respect - staff attitudes
2. Failure to respond to requests for assistance
3. Personal hygiene
4. Medication – administration, organization
5. Discharge/eviction

### Fiscal Year Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Oct - Dec</th>
<th>Jan - Mar</th>
<th>Apr - Jun</th>
<th>Jul - Sep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No action needed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolved</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially resolved</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not resolved</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reflects both initiation and closure dates that may overlap quarterly reporting periods.

### Quarterly Ombudsman Program Data – Fiscal Year 2014-2015

- Complaint Investigations: Oct - Dec: 1,623, Jan - Mar: 1,687, Apr - Jun: 2,091, Jul - Sep: 2,153

- 7,738 Facility Assessments and Visitations Statewide
- 305 Volunteers
- 86,000 Estimated Unpaid Hours Worked
- 388,531 Miles Traveled by Staff & Volunteers
- $1,941,919 Estimated Average of Savings

### Complaint Resolution
Become a volunteer today! Call (888) 831-0404.
http://ombudsman.myflorida.com/