

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services  
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Department 325, Bismarck ND 58505-0250**

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For more information, contact Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933, or LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892.

## **Program that advocates for the rights and quality of life of long-term care residents offers new way to report concerns**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is making it easier for people to report concerns about the quality of care and quality of life of people living in long-term care facilities. A new online reporting form is now available on the state’s website at [www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn01829.pdf](http://www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn01829.pdf).

People can use the form to report concerns involving resident rights and choices, care planning, responses to requests for assistance, communication issues with facility staff, food, residents’ personal funds, transfers and discharges, problems with billing and charges, and other issues.

“We want to make it as easy as possible for residents of long-term care facilities, their families, facility staff, and others to report concerns to a long-term care ombudsman. If they prefer, individuals can report a concern by calling the Aging and Disability Resource Link toll-free at 1-855-462-5465, and then pressing 1, or they can talk to the ombudsman who regularly visits their facility. Facilities are required to post ombudsman contact information,” said State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Karla Backman.

Aging Services Division staff members answer the telephone resource link Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Central Time. People calling after hours should leave a message and their contact information.

Backman said local ombudsman staff and volunteer ombudsmen are located throughout the state to follow-up on reported concerns and to advocate for residents.

“We are not a regulatory program,” she explained. “We work to resolve concerns according to the resident’s wishes through communication, advocacy, and education about residents’ rights.”

The federally-required program serves individuals residing in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, basic care facilities, and hospital swing bed, transitional, and sub-acute settings.

During the 2014 federal fiscal year, the state ombudsman program responded to 968 concerns.

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The new long-term care ombudsman program reporting form should not be confused with the vulnerable adult protective services program, which responds to reports of possible abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Currently, about 20 volunteer ombudsmen assist ombudsman program staff in serving North Dakotans residing in long-term care facilities. Volunteers are assigned to facilities in their communities, where they listen to residents' concerns, educate about resident rights, and advocate for residents.

To learn more about the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program or how to volunteer, visit [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/ombudsman.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/ombudsman.html) or contact Karla Backman at the North Dakota Department of Human Services Aging Services Division at 701-328-4617, ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888, [dhsagingombud@nd.gov](mailto:dhsagingombud@nd.gov), or 1237 W. Divide Ave., Ste. 6, Bismarck, N.D., 58501.

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