



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the time commitment required of Certified Volunteers? Do they sometimes need more than that to do the job? What do the required hours include?

Volunteers are asked to commit to approximately 3-5 hours per 90 days when they can be available at times to meet the resident's needs, *mostly during weekday business hours*. Ideally this would include visiting residents, reporting and travel to/from facilities. There are times when volunteers do spend more time on a particular case or resident, but there is flexibility when you volunteer. You can set your own schedule and we ask that volunteers visiting the same facility do not make visits at the same time, or on the same day of the week. Some volunteers donate much more time to the program, but the average is 3-5 hours every 90 days. We request a one-year commitment to the program following initial training.

2. What kind of authority does a Certified Volunteer have at his/her facility?

Once volunteers complete their background check, training, have been in the program for 6 months, have 28 contact hours in Volunteering and pass their exam, they are certified as representatives of the State of Georgia to fulfill their Ombudsman duties. They have statutory authority to go into their assigned facility at any time, and advocate for the rights and dignity of the resident.

3. How does a Volunteer begin the advocacy work and introduce him/herself to the residents in the facilities to which he/she is assigned?

Volunteers are issued a name badge which shall be worn on every visit. The Volunteer will visit the residents and establish a relationship with them. (Typically the Volunteer will knock on the residents' door, and introduce himself or herself to the resident. The specifics are left up to the volunteers, as everyone's style is different. The goal is to inform the resident that the Volunteer is there to advocate for the resident.) It may take a few visits for the residents to understand and trust the Volunteer before bringing any concerns to them (this is part of why we request a long-term volunteer commitment of at least one year). Information regarding communicating with the elderly, staff, and families as well as case studies are presented at training.

4. How is an Ombudsman assigned to facilities? Is assignment to facilities that are close to the volunteer's home a priority?

CV's are assigned using two main factors: where we have a need for volunteers and the volunteers' preference. If the volunteer would prefer to have an assignment close to them we'll make every effort as long as there's a facility available. However, some volunteers prefer to



Frequently Asked Questions

visit a facility near where they may already travel or in another community.

5. “If I work at a facility or have a family member residing in a facility is this a potential conflict of interest?”

A conflict of interest may exist when:

- (a) A person or a member of the person’s immediate family has any financial or ownership interests in a long-term care facility or is employed by a long-term care facility;
- (b) A person is an employee, agent, or officer of an Area Agency on Aging, type B, or the local state office of the Senior and Disabled Services Division;
- (c) A person has been employed by a long-term care facility within the last year.

6. When do trainings take place? Where are they held? What topics are covered in each session? What kind of test is given at the end?

Training take place on a weekly basis. Training topics covered include principals of advocacy, resident rights, medical terms, types of facilities, rules and regulations, communication and negotiation. Volunteers are given a great deal of resource information and are **not** expected to memorize it, but rather to know where to find the information and how to apply it. An open book, take home exam is given for the volunteer to return before being certified. Volunteers can expect to begin actively volunteering with residents within days of completing their shadowing visits and initial training with staff.

7. Who directs the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman? What is their background?

The Georgia Long-Term Care State Ombudsman is Melanie McNeil, Esq. Her background is law but she does a great deal of advocacy on the state legislative level. Besides being the agency director, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman also advises the Governor and Legislature on long-term care issues.

8. What are the most common complaints from facility residents, and how are they normally handled?

The most common complaints are about food quality, call lights not being answered, needs of the resident being unmet, billing problems, and medication errors. If the matter can be resolved within the facility, the CV and COR works with the staff and administration with the primary goal being to protect the rights and dignity of the resident. The role of the COR and CV is not to make decisions or create an adversarial environment but to effectively *advocate for what the resident wants*.



Frequently Asked Questions

9. What is the typical day of an Ombudsman like?

A typical day would include visiting a facility and meeting with the residents, or following up on a previous case with phone calls made from home, or meeting with facility staff. Volunteers have a great deal of discretion over when and where they make their facility visits, so a typical day can be flexible more than anything else!

10. When and where are the monthly support group meetings? What topics are covered? Is there additional training?

The weekly ACV Training meetings are typically held for one hour each week, 12 months of the year. The location and time is 10:30 to 11:30am via Video Conferencing or participants can call in. The Program Coordinator will lead the meeting and topics covered might be changes in laws or regulations, new research on aging, presentations about community resources, and the like. If resources allow there is a statewide Ombudsman Fall Conference annually which all Certified Volunteers are able to attend. In addition, statewide Webinar trainings may be held where volunteers can participate.

11. What are the requirements for continuing education, and how can they be met?

Continuing education is presented at the weekly ACV Training meeting, or volunteers can suggest an opportunity they can attend on their own with approval from the Program Coordinator.

12. How many Certified Volunteers are there currently in the Capitol program?

Generally there are approximately 13 certified volunteers and another 17 volunteers training to become certified in the Capitol area, but we are always in need of more, especially in rural areas such as the north and south Cobb County area.

13. How long has the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) program been in existence?

The LTCO program has been in existence since the 1960's nationally as a result of the Older Americans Act. Every state has an Ombudsman program but they are structured differently. The program began in the Atlanta metro area some 30+ years ago. The program was taken over by the Capitol LTCO Program in 2016.

14. How many people are served each year by the LTCO program?

Every year we make over 1,800 visits to residents in licensed long-term care facilities. These are a combination of responses to complaints or concerns made to our office or regular



Frequently Asked Questions

unannounced visits. Of those 1,800, over 50 percent of those visits were made by volunteers across the three county area. Local volunteers are the key to timely visits and effective advocacy.

15. How many people are in LTC in the Capitol Region?

There are approximately 13,200 residents in Long-term care facilities in the Capitol Region. These facilities include nursing homes, personal care homes, assisted living facilities, and community living arrangements.