

# State of Idaho

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### NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Idaho Long Term Care State Ombudsman Program

BOISE ID (March 30, 2020)

In response to Governor Brad Little's, Stay at Home Order of March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Long-Term Care Ombudsmen are trained advocates, mediators, complaint investigators and problem solvers who are authorized under the Older Americans Act (OAA) to serve residents of long-term care facilities free of charge.

While the OAA does not authorize Ombudsmen to serve as first responders in emergencies or disasters, the OAA and federal regulations<sup>1</sup> do require the Ombudsmen to provide services to assist residents in protecting their health, safety, welfare, and rights, as well as to represent the interests of residents before governmental agencies.<sup>2</sup>

### Who we are:

The Idaho Long Term Care Ombudsmen have 13 paid staff and 53 volunteers (assistant Ombudsmen), throughout the state, in 6 Area Agency on Aging offices in Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Boise, Twin Falls, Pocatello and Idaho Falls. You can find contact information for each area on the Idaho Commission on Aging website, <https://aging.idaho.gov/>.

### What we do:

The Ombudsmen provide consultation and answer questions related to long-term care. We provide training and education to residents, families and the community. Ombudsmen receive complaints from residents, resident representatives, family, friends, medical professionals and others who serve long-term care residents. We act as mediators in difficult situations where a third party is necessary to resolve concerns. Ombudsmen make routine unannounced visits to the 364 skilled nursing and assisted living facilities in Idaho to provide education to staff and residents and to assure that residents health, safety, welfare and rights are protected.

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<sup>1</sup> 45 CFR 1324

<sup>2</sup> OAA Section 712(a)(3)(B),(E), 712(a)(5)(B)(iii), (iv); 42 USC 3058g(a)(3)(B), (E), 3058g(a)(5)(B)(iii), (iv); 45 CFR 1324.13(a)(1),(5), .19(a)(1), (4)

<https://aging.idaho.gov/>

**We are here and ready to serve during COVID-19:**

Due to CMS's Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Nursing Homes, and the Residential Assisted Living Facility Program guidance, visitation to long-term care facilities is restricted except for certain compassionate care situations such as end of life. Ombudsmen are not exempt from these restrictions, which creates special challenges and the opportunity to be creative in our service delivery. We are available through phone or email to address your concerns.

**So, how can we help?** Facilities are required to provide residents access to the Ombudsman Program through telecommunication during an emergency such as COVID-19. The Ombudsman Program is advocating using other means than face-to-face visits and is still receiving and investigating complaints to the satisfaction of residents and resident representatives. Ombudsmen are advocating for residents and resident family visitation through telecommunication and other means available.

Residents and complainants have the right to confidentiality and to remain anonymous.

We need to remember, that these are challenging times and our long-term care and residential care administrators and staff are working under extraordinary circumstances and need our kindness and gratitude for what they do to provide care for our loved ones who reside in facilities.

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