



Missouri Long-Term Care

Ombudsman

ADVOCATE. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

2025 Annual Report



The Office of the Missouri State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a programmatically independent advocacy service located within the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). Points of view, opinions or positions of the Ombudsman do not necessarily represent the view, positions or policy of DHSS. This annual report is compiled and distributed to meet federal law requirements.

State Ombudsman Introduction

Dear Long-Term Care Residents, Families and Stakeholders,

I am pleased to present the 2025 Annual Report of the Missouri Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (Office).

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocates for residents living in long-term care facilities across the state. This includes all levels of care and veteran's homes. Ombudsmen are critical in ensuring residents have someone to speak to on their behalf. By conducting routine visits, ombudsmen help residents solve concerns that impact their quality of life and quality of care. Our goal is to build a personal and trusting relationship with residents, especially those who are hesitant to speak up. We provide education to facilities regarding resident rights per state and federal regulations.

Ombudsmen help ensure residents are not improperly discharged from a facility and assists with appeals. The Ombudsman Program provides community education and awareness to the public and assists with the process of finding facility placement for individuals. We help fill in the gap between surveys completed by the State Survey Agency (the Division of Regulation and Licensure) by having eyes on residents more routinely and assisting with concerns before they escalate.

Significant challenges remain that affect residents and ombudsman program advocacy in Missouri. The Ombudsman Program still lacks sufficient state funding resulting in staffing that falls far below national standards. An investment of \$2.619 million in dedicated state funding is needed to achieve a bare minimum of staff positions.

Despite the challenges, we remain committed to providing a voice for long-term care residents. We will continue to advocate for a good quality of life and good care that all long-term care residents deserve.



Jenny Hollandsworth
State Long-Term Care Ombudsman



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Executive Summary

Overview

- The Missouri Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a federally mandated advocacy program for residents of long-term care facilities that provides informal complaint resolution and promotes system change on behalf of residents' interests. The program consists of a state office housed at the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and regional ombudsmen contracted with the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA).
- There are 16 full-time equivalent (FTE) regional ombudsmen serving residents in over 1,100 long-term care facilities across 115 counties.
- There continue to be too few long-term care ombudsmen in Missouri to meet the high, and growing, demand for services. As such, funding is one of the primary barriers to providing excellent ombudsman services to Missouri's long-term care residents.

Recommendation to Strengthen the Missouri Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program:

- Support the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman by increasing state funding by \$2.619 million to add 27 more paid staff, contracted with the AAAs.

An Introduction: The Missouri Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

The Missouri Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is an advocacy program for residents of long-term care facilities. It was established under the federal Older Americans Act of 1965. Every state and territory must have an Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (Office) that is established by the State Unit on Aging and headed by a full-time State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (State Ombudsman) who directs the program statewide. In Missouri, the Office is housed within the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Missouri's State Unit on Aging. The State Ombudsman is required to:

- Identify, investigate and resolve complaints made by or on behalf of residents.
- Provide information to residents about long-term services and supports.
- Ensure that residents have regular and timely access to an ombudsman.
- Represent the interests of residents before governmental agencies and seek administrative, legal and other remedies to protect residents.
- Analyze, comment on and recommend changes in laws and regulations pertaining to the health, safety, welfare and rights of residents.

Ombudsman services are free and confidential and are available statewide.

Structure of the Office

- The Office is comprised of a State Office, housed at DHSS and 10 regional ombudsman programs that provide advocacy services at the local level statewide. The State Office contracts with each of the state's 10 AAA. Seven of the 10 agencies further contract with local, community-based organizations and other entities to provide ombudsman services. While these local entities are responsible for the personnel management of ombudsmen they house, the State Ombudsman is responsible for managing all ombudsman activities



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statewide. The AAAs employ 16 FTE regional long-term care ombudsmen who provide services in over 1,100 facilities across the state. The program is also supported by approximately 60 trained and certified volunteers who increase its reach by visiting facilities and educating residents. However, volunteer recruitment and retention suffer without resources for strong management to train and supervise volunteers. Many regions in the state are so short-staffed they do not have the time to recruit and train additional volunteers.

FFY 2025: A Year in Review

FFY 2025 was a very challenging year for the Missouri Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. It was a year filled with many lessons in hope and resilience.

- The program is primarily federally funded and much of the year was filled with uncertainty as to whether the program would continue to exist if federal funding ended. This left Ombudsman feeling very uneasy about the status of their job and concerned for residents who may not have access to an Ombudsman. Thankfully, federal funding did continue for all Ombudsman Programs, after much advocacy on the national level about the importance of State Ombudsman Programs.
- The use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds came to an end in June of 2025. This was a significant loss to our program as the funding paid for five temporary part-time Ombudsman staff to provide focused attention to residential and assisted living facilities. These types of facilities are often visited less frequently than skilled nursing facilities due to the lack of Ombudsmen available. Losing these temporary staff meant an increased workload for regional ombudsman who were already under- staffed.
- Due to budget challenges, one of the regional ombudsman programs had to indefinitely lay off an Ombudsman in April 2025. Another program did not fill a vacancy when the Ombudsman resigned in June 2025. The loss of these two positions on top of losing the five part-time temporary staff has been devastating to our program that was already severely understaffed.
- The Assistant State Ombudsman position became vacant in June 2025. The position was re-classified in December 2025 (FFY 26) to become an Ombudsman Representative assisting with facility visits due to our program's staffing crisis.

Barriers of the Missouri Ombudsman Program

Inadequate Resources to Support the Ombudsman Program

More long-term care ombudsmen are needed in Missouri to meet the high, and growing, demand for services. As such, funding is one of the primary barriers to providing excellent ombudsman services to Missouri's long-term care residents. Currently, Missouri has approximately 81,000 licensed long-term care beds between skilled nursing homes, assisted living facilities, residential care facilities and veterans' homes.

Even with great challenges, dedicated Ombudsman continued to provide advocacy and make a positive impact for Missouri long-term care residents. Below are some highlights of FFY 25.

Please note: the infographic created by Mon Ami shows 87 volunteers. That number represents the number who volunteered at some point in the FFY. Only about 60 remain active volunteers.



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Protectors of Care

The True Power of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in Missouri in 2025

At its heart, the **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** advocates for residents of nursing homes, residential care communities and other similar adult care facilities. Ombudsmen help residents and families understand their rights and support residents in using them--so they're treated with dignity and respect. This infographic captures the impact, backed by data from the National Ombudsman Reporting System FFY 2025.

1,012
Facilities
visited¹

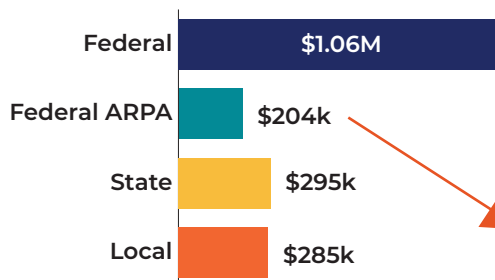
2,297
Complaints
investigated²

16
Staff
Ombudsmen
(FTE)³

87
Volunteer
Ombudsmen⁴



In 2025, on average, **1 FTE ombudsman** served **63 facilities**⁵ investigating **144 complaints**⁶



In 2025, with **\$1,844,773** of total funding⁷, the LTCOP only spent **\$13 per bed**⁸ to protect the rights of the residents

In 2026, the program loses 10% of its funding as ARPA expires



Facility Visits

Made 5,388 visits⁹

Ombudsmen connect with residents, observe care firsthand, and identify systemic issues early



Facility Staff Consultation

Conducted 932 consults for facility staff¹⁰

Ombudsmen train facility staff on residents' rights and good practices to promote individualized, quality care



Information & Assistance

Provided 3,776 instances of I&A¹¹

Empowers residents, and their family and friends, with information and resources about their rights and how to take action

One Voice at a Time, Protecting Hundreds of Thousands

We reach

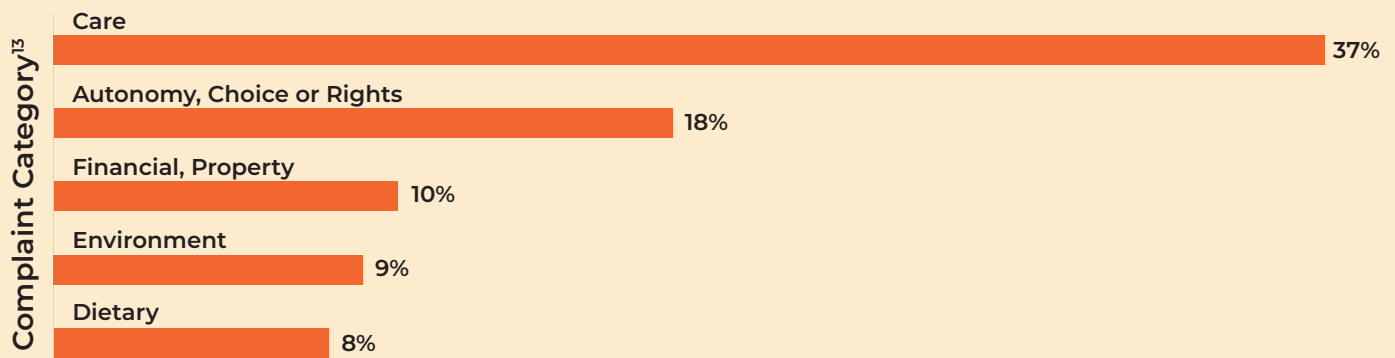
5,061 Long-Term Care facility residents for every 1 FTE staff ombudsman in the state¹², ensuring dignity and safety where it matters most.

The national standard is 1 paid Ombudsman for every 2,000 licensed beds.



We hear

In 2025, **2,297 complaints** were investigated. Without the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, these issues may go unheard.



We empower

Volunteers contributed **8,138 hours¹⁴**, providing **\$260,985** worth of vital support¹⁵, extending the program at a fraction of the cost.

Additional paid staff are needed to recruit, retain, and supervise successful volunteers.



Appendix: Data Sources & Calculations

National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS) FFY 2025

All data related to program activities, staff, volunteers, facilities and complaints is from the FFY2025 NORS dataset.

Administration for Community Living (ACL). 2024. National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS) (Title VII) dataset. AGID Data Explorer: <https://agid.acl.gov/data-explorer>.

¹Total Number of State Facilities Visited

²All Settings Total Complaints

³Total Local Full Time Equivalent

⁴Total Local Volunteer Representatives

⁵Total Number of State Facilities Visited / Total Local Full Time Equivalent

⁶All Settings Total Complaints / Total Local Full Time Equivalent

⁷OAA Title VII, Chapter 2, Ombudsman

⁸OAA Title VII, Chapter 2, Ombudsman / Total Resident Capacity (Nursing Facility and Residential Care Community)

⁹Number of Visits (Nursing Facility) + Number of Visits (Residential Care Community)

¹⁰Training Sessions for Facility Staff (Nursing Facility) + Training Sessions for Facility Staff (Residential Care Community)

¹¹Information and Assistance to Individuals

¹²Total Resident Capacity (Nursing Facility and Residential Care Community) / Total Local Full Time Equivalent

¹³Percentage is calculated by the Total Complaints for each category / All Settings Total Complaints. Only the top categories are shown.

¹⁴Number of Volunteer Hours Donated

¹⁵Number of Volunteer Hours Donated * Hourly Value of Volunteer Time [Independent Sector. (2025, April). Value of Volunteer Time by State (2014-2024). <https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/vovt-state-by-state-data-2025.pdf>]



Recommendations

More Staff Ombudsmen are Needed: Support the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman with Dedicated State Funding

Missouri must significantly increase support for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program using state general revenue funding. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services contracts with the Area Agencies on Aging regions across Missouri for the provision of local ombudsman services. An additional \$2.619 Million in state general revenue is needed to add additional paid ombudsman.

The Institutes of Medicine (IOM) report, “Real People, Real Problems: Evaluation of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs of the Older Americans Act (1995),” recommends a minimum ratio of one paid ombudsman FTE to 2,000 beds, not including the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. There has been a significant increase in acuity of long-term care residents since this study was published in 1995, resulting in increasing complexity in ombudsman case work. Nevertheless, the IOM report remains the primary tool with which ombudsman programs assess staffing needs. According to the IOM recommendation, Missouri would need at least 27 additional ombudsmen to be adequately staffed by 1995 standards. Currently, our program is struggling to meet the demand, with approximately one paid ombudsman for every 5,061 long-term care beds.

Ombudsmen are needed more than ever, as residents have many concerns related to insufficient facility staffing which can lead to poor quality of care and abuse/neglect in some cases. The increasing number of residents with complex care needs who depend on our advocacy underscores the necessity for ombudsmen to be present and responsive. Additional ombudsmen are needed to conduct more facility visits to ensure resident safety. Due to our current funding level for staffing, we have many facilities that are only visited twice a year. This leaves residents at a higher risk for poor outcomes and feeling like they don’t have an advocate, especially for those residents who do not have family. Our ombudsmen are stretched too thin to adequately cover over 1,100 facilities across Missouri.

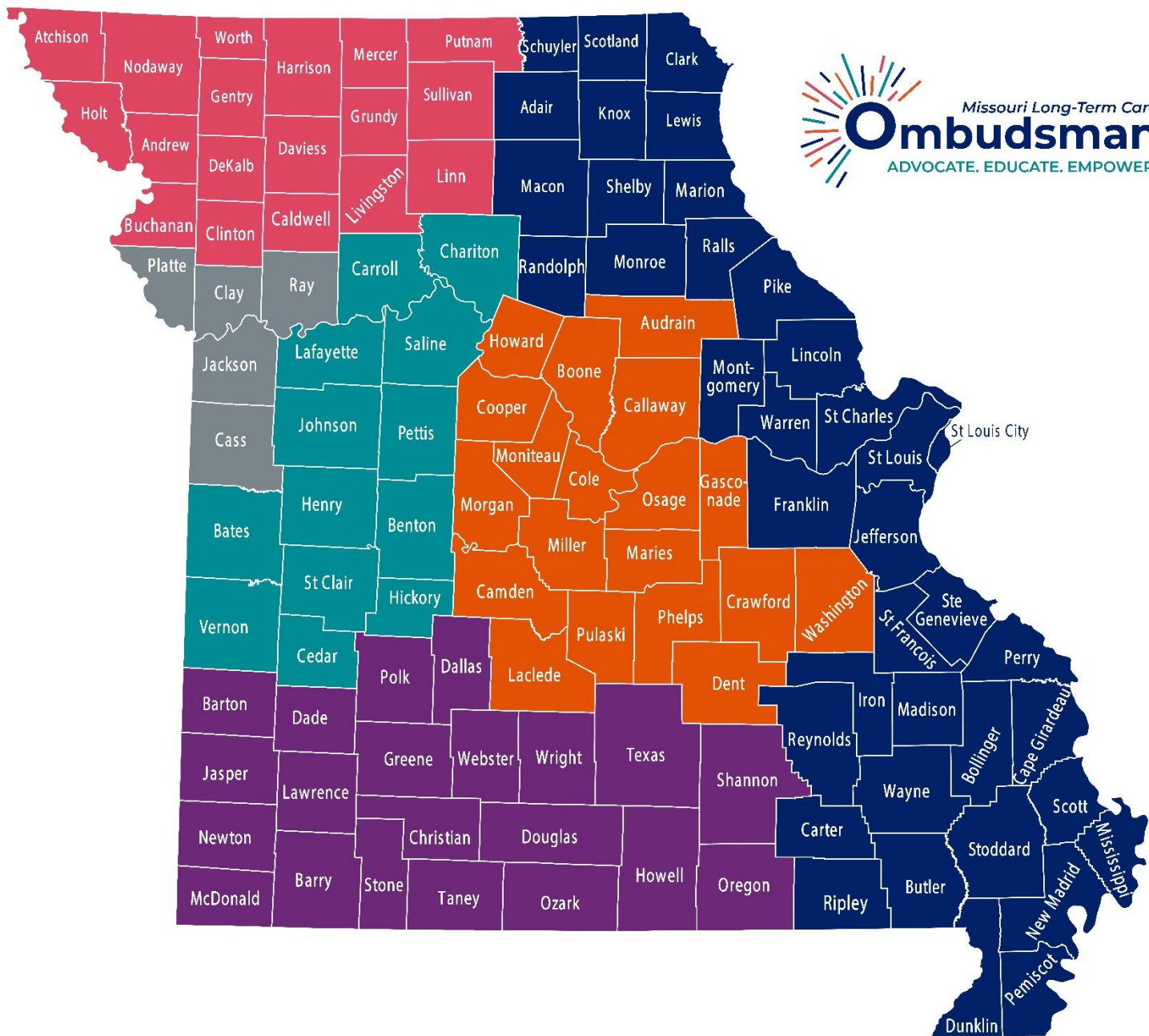
Each additional paid ombudsman increases the program’s capacity to take in new volunteers, therefore additional funding will not only provide more paid ombudsmen staff but will allow us to increase the number of volunteer ombudsmen we can onboard, train and supervise.

While challenges remain, we are proud that the Missouri Ombudsman Program continues to advocate, educate and empower residents. We remain hopeful that the program will one day be adequately funded and therefore staffed to ensure all residents have access to an Ombudsman whenever they need one.

The Ombudsman Program map on the next page shows the name of the agency and counties they service. The Office also can be reached at 800-309-3282 or LTCOmbudsman@health.mo.gov.



[Health.mo.gov/ombudsman](https://health.mo.gov/ombudsman)



Missouri Long-Term Care

Ombudsman

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Young at Heart Resources
(660) 240-9400
www.yahresources.org



VOYCE
(314) 918-8222
www.voycestl.org



Mid-America Regional Council
(816) 474-4240
www.marc.org



Aging Best
(573) 443-5823
www.agingbest.org



Care Connection for Aging Services
(660) 747-3107
www.goaging.org



Crosslines Community Outreach
(417) 862-3598
ccoark.org

Young at Heart Resources

(660) 240-9400

www.yahresources.org

- Andrew
- Atchison
- Buchanan
- Caldwell
- Clinton
- Daviess
- DeKalb
- Gentry
- Grundy
- Holt
- Linn
- Livingston
- Mercer
- Nodaway
- Putnam
- Sullivan
- Worth

Mid-America Regional Council

(816) 474-4240

www.marc.org

- Cass
- Class
- Jackson
- Platte
- Ray

Care Connection for Aging Services

(660) 747-3107

www.goaging.org

- Bates
- Benton
- Carroll
- Cedar
- Chariton
- Henry
- Hickory
- Johnson
- Lafayette
- Pettis
- Saline
- St. Clair
- Vernon

VOYCE

(314) 918-8222

www.voycestl.org

- Adair
- Bollinger
- Butler
- Cape Girardeau
- Carter
- Clark
- Dunklin
- Franklin
- Iron
- Jefferson
- Knox
- Lewis
- Lincoln
- Macon
- Madison
- Marion
- Mississippi
- Monroe
- Montgomery
- New Madrid
- Pemiscot
- Perry
- Pike
- Ralls
- Randolph
- Reynolds
- Ripley
- Schuyler
- Scotland
- Scott
- Shelby
- St. Charles
- St. Francois
- St. Louis
- St. Louis City
- Ste. Genevieve
- Stoddard
- Warren
- Wayne



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Aging Best

(573) 443-5823

www.agingbest.org

- Audrain
- Boone
- Callaway
- Camden
- Cole
- Cooper
- Crawford
- Dent
- Gasconade
- Howard
- Laclede
- Maries
- Miller
- Moniteau
- Morgan
- Osage
- Phelps
- Pulaski
- Washington

Crosslines Community Church

(417) 862-3596

<https://ccozaarks.org/>

- Barry
- Barton
- Christian
- Dade
- Dallas
- Douglas
- Greene
- Howell
- Jasper
- Lawrence
- McDonald
- Newton
- Oregon
- Ozark
- Shannon
- Stone
- Taney
- Texas
- Webster
- Wright



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