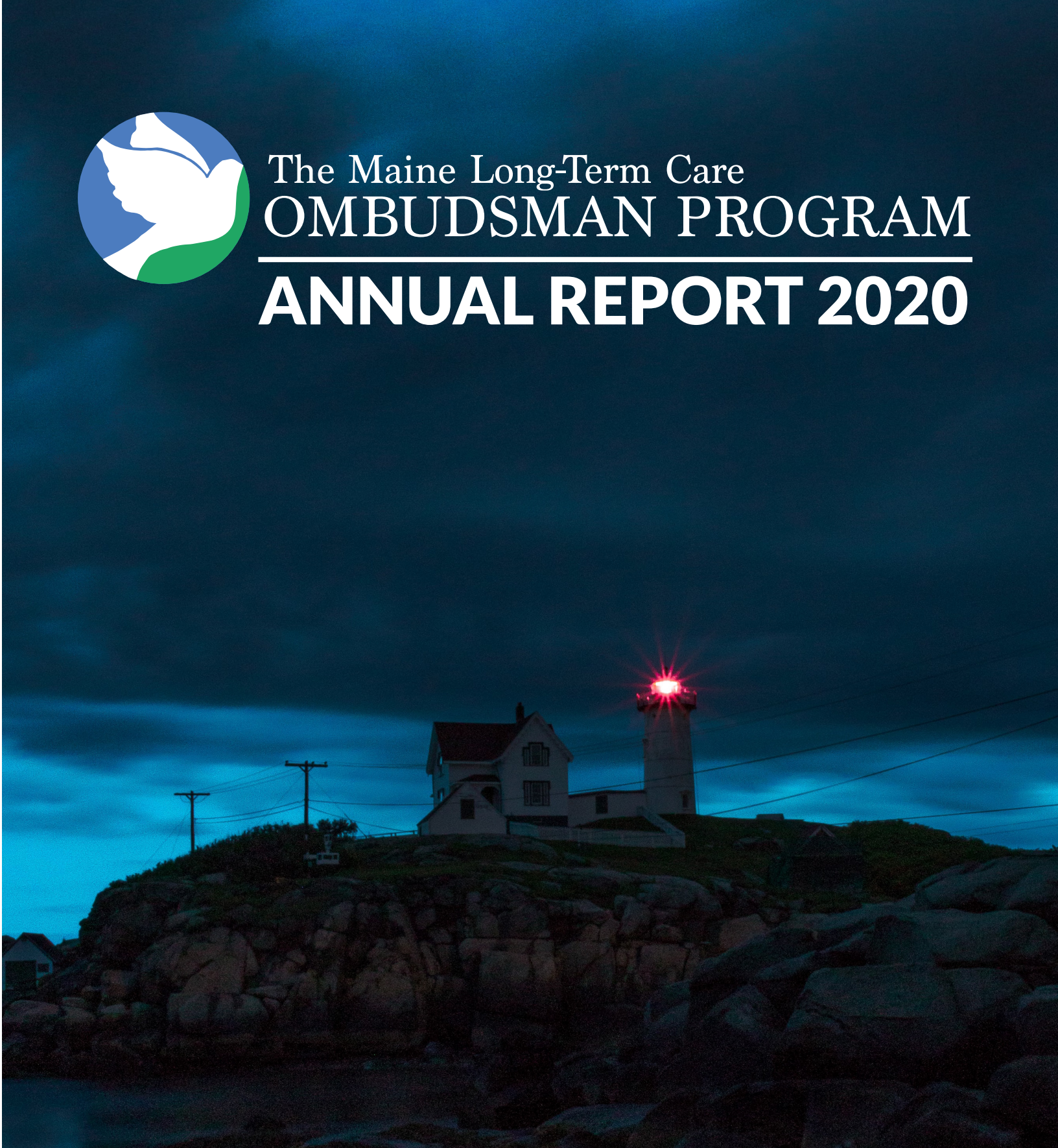






The Maine Long-Term Care
OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM


ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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Message from the Executive Director

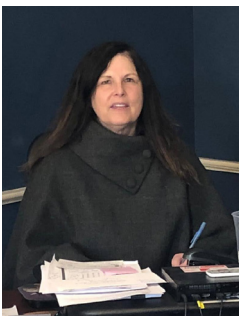
COVID-19 has changed all our lives. For those in long-term care homes, it has meant restrictions we couldn't have imagined a year ago including restricted visitation with a long separation from loved ones. For both residents and their families, it has been agonizing to be apart: phone calls, letters, and video chats can't replace in-person visits.

When Maine announced its first case of COVID-19, the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) took immediate action. With long-term care homes on lockdown and our staff and highly trained volunteers no longer able to perform onsite visits and complaint investigation in person, we knew we had to quickly reach out to all homes, staff, residents and their families. Our staff and volunteers implemented an intensive outreach effort by Zoom, FaceTime, phone calls and emails to remain in contact with residents and their families.

Our work didn't stop there - we partnered with The Office of Aging and Disability Services, the Division of Licensing and Certification and Maine CDC to carry out surveys critical in determining infection control practices in long-term care homes. We reached out to collaborate with hospitals, home care agencies and long-term care homes to assure coordination of services during the pandemic.

More recently, we've hosted webinars for families of residents to provide information and support regarding COVID-19 restrictions. While this pandemic isn't over yet, we are confident that if we continue to work together we can continue to save lives and provide the needed support to residents and consumers of long-term care.

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation for LTCOP's Board of Directors who fully support the mission of the program, and for our staff and volunteers for their diligence in serving long-term care consumers.



Brenda Gallant, R.N.
Executive Director



Advocacy for Residents in Long Term Care Homes

LTCOP, through the Older Americans Act, federal regulations, and Maine state statute, is granted authority to identify, investigate and resolve complaints on behalf of residents of nursing homes, residential care homes and assisted living programs. We are responsible for assisting residents in protecting their health, safety, welfare, and rights. Through regular visits by staff and volunteers, residents have timely, private and unimpeded access to the advocacy provided by LTCOP.

Advocacy for Residents in Nursing Homes

During FY20, LTCOP received 666 nursing home complaints including complaints related to quality of care, admission and discharge, staffing, resident rights, dietary/food service and COVID-19 related complaints. 620 were resolved to the satisfaction of the resident or their legal representative. LTCOP focuses our work on providing residents with information about their rights and providing advocacy to ensure that residents receive a high quality of care and quality of life. To achieve this, we work collaboratively with DHHS, Division of Licensing and Certification as well as Adult Protective Services.

Advocacy for Residents in Assisted Housing

During FY20, LTCOP received 408 assisted housing complaints including complaints related to quality of care, admission and discharge, resident rights, staffing, and COVID-19 related complaints. 373 were resolved to the satisfaction of the resident or their legal representative. At the start of the public health emergency related to COVID-19, the Division of Licensing and Certification and LTCOP began meeting biweekly and sometimes weekly to review issues impacting residents. These meetings provided an opportunity to share information about assisted housing homes with COVID-19 outbreaks, as well as problem solve complaints that LTCOP was receiving from residents and family members about visit restrictions.

Advocacy for Home Care Consumers

Whenever possible older adults and adults with disabilities who need long-term services and supports want to remain in their homes. As the use of home care services expands, LTCOP's advocacy has increased.

This past year brought new challenges to home care consumers with the pandemic affecting staffing, adult day programming, and access to their typical informal supports. Maine is already facing a systemic staffing shortage; the pandemic brought an additional strain on the system that led to an increase in consumers reaching out about lack of staffing or access to home care services. LTCOP worked with families to get creative about keeping their loved ones safe at home by connecting them with assistive technology, durable medical equipment, self-directed care and other community volunteer-based resources.



In FY20 staff and volunteers made **1359 visits** to long-term care homes across the state. In response to restrictions on visitation, we made **969 outreach calls** to homes, residents and family members, and participated virtually in **36 resident council meetings**.

COVID-19 LTCOP requested an increase in the number of bed hold days for nursing home residents, helped families resolve barriers to compassionate care visits, and encouraged long-term care homes to allow window visits.

During FY20, LTCOP received **247 home care complaints** including:

- 52** needing more home care services/lack of staff complaints
- 36** termination/reduction/denial of services complaints
- 17** assessing services agency/assessment process complaints.



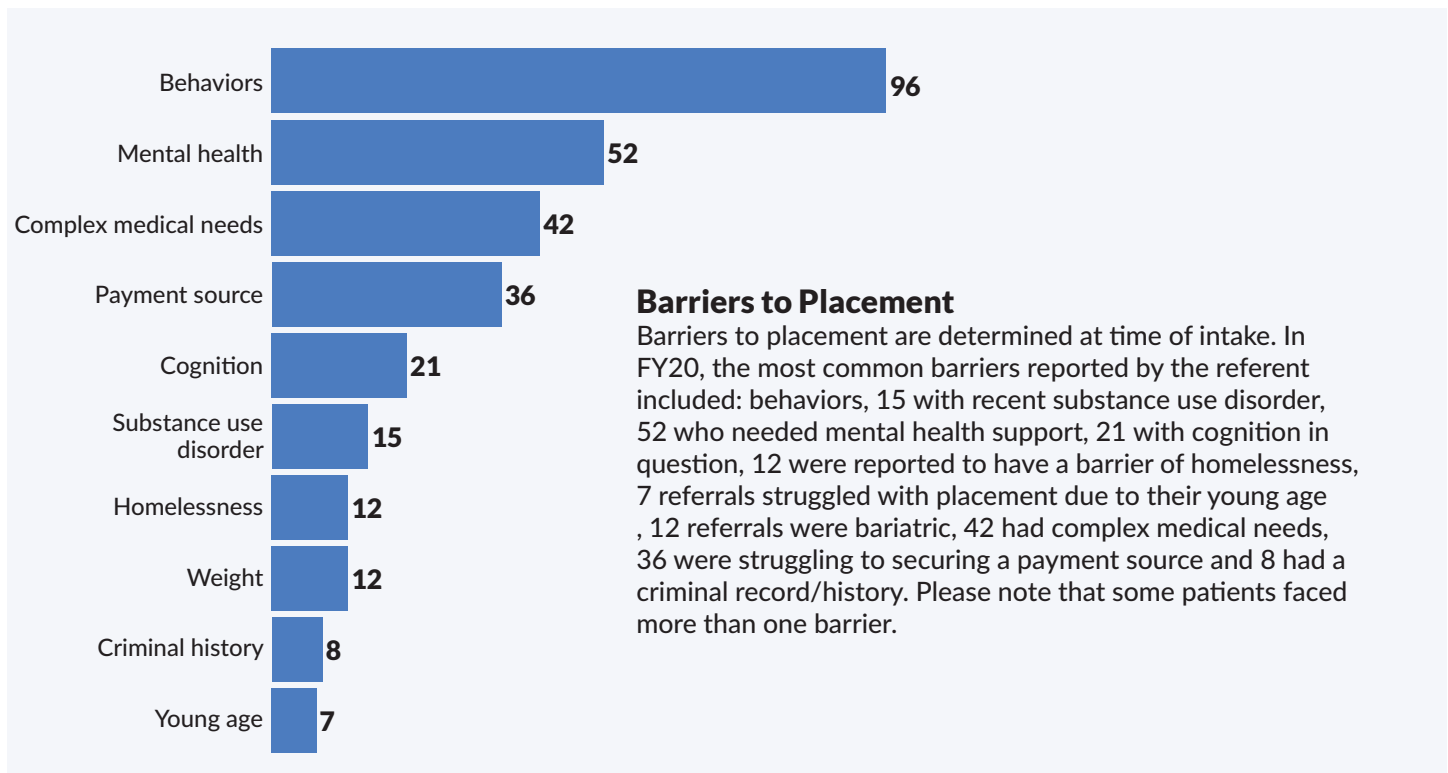
Hospital Patient Advocacy

LTCOP provides advocacy for patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing long-term services and supports. These patients are unable to obtain placement or home care services due to a variety of reasons including; dementia with symptoms of distress that can be challenging to manage, mental illness, bariatric needs, complex medical needs, lack of payment source, young age, and criminal history. Historically, these individuals waited weeks, months or even years, for services to be set up at home or in a long-term care home.

The COVID-19 pandemic has limited LTCOP's ability to meet with patients at the hospital. Our staff instead talked with patients and their representatives by phone and Zoom. We reviewed records and worked to resolve the barriers delaying discharge from the hospital. Advocacy included supporting negotiations for higher reimbursement rates, assisting with follow up on MaineCare applications and Medical Eligibility Determination assessments, requesting the hospital complete needed evaluations and behavioral plans, identifying assistive technology or environmental modifications, and navigating prior authorizations for durable medical equipment.



In FY20, LTCOP opened **200 cases** to assist patients who experienced barriers to accessing supports and services. As of 9/30/20, **176 cases** were resolved.



Legislative Advocacy

LTCOP submits testimony on all long-term care legislation. Our testimony reflects the issues we observe as a result of our work with consumers. This past legislative session we focused our efforts on supporting rate increases for home care, funding for the 7 affordable assisted living homes and on the implementation of recommendations of the Commission to Study Long Term Care Workforce Issues.



Transition Assistance

LTCOP receives calls from nursing home residents wanting to transition to the community. We work with these residents as well as those in assisted housing settings who want to transition to the community.


When children with complex medical needs transition from children's to adult home care services, families find there is not always a comparable adult program available that will meet their child's needs. LTCOP receives referrals from families who are getting 24/7 staffing under PDN IV children's services, but are not eligible for 24/7 care under adult programming. Additionally, these transitions often present challenges for consumers to continue accessing programming such as adult day services, or their ability to have the support they need in the community.

LTCOP provides advocacy for these families by helping in the appeal process and/or in the request for an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reasonable accommodation so they can continue to have their needs met in adult programming. In cases where families are looking to place a consumer in a long-term care home, or if home care staffing cannot be found, LTCOP assists in the search for appropriate placement. In the current fiscal year, LTCOP has had 6 cases of children transitioning to adult services.

Volunteer Program

Our Volunteer Program is an integral part of LTCOP's efforts to ensure the mission of the organization is accomplished. The Volunteer Ombudsman Representatives (VOR) in many ways are seen as the heart of the program, serving in capacities that best suit their abilities and needs of the program. Volunteers enhance the services of LTCOP as skillfully trained advocates certified by the State Ombudsman. They provide a voice for the concerns of long-term care residents who are living in nursing homes, residential care homes, and assisted living programs. Our volunteers assist in complaint investigations, visit long-term care homes quarterly, and provide education to long-term care staff. Volunteers conduct monitoring visits to long-term care homes assisting LTCOP staff to maintain a presence at least quarterly in nursing homes, residential care and assisted living programs across the state. It is only with our dedicated corps of volunteers that LTCOP is able to achieve our mandated goal of being in every long-term care home each quarter.

During this reporting period, the Volunteer Program maintained an average of 35 Volunteer Ombudsman Representatives that were assigned to visit 24 nursing homes and 21 assisted housing homes across the state. In total, when including quarterly monitoring visits, volunteers visited 39 nursing homes and 68 assisted housing homes across the state every three months. Volunteers contributed 824 hours during which they made 295 routine, unannounced visits to their assigned homes. Volunteers reported and handled 45 incidents from residents, family members, staff, and their own observations. Through the efforts of Regional Ombudsmen and volunteers, LTCOP provided 18 resident rights in-services to long-term care homes and a family council during this reporting period.

 During FY20, LTCOP received **24 referrals** for transition assistance for residents in nursing homes and assisted housing. **11 residents** have transitioned to the community and 10 are still in active planning prior to transition. 3 chose to remain in place and not transition.



Nicole Marchesi and VOR, Cathy Matthews



Nicole Marchesi, Clark and Martha Hooper, Dan Mocariski and Amy Vitanza





The Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a non-profit agency whose mission is to advocate for quality of care and life for residents in nursing homes, residential care, and assisted living. Our services are free and confidential.

What does the Maine Long-Term Ombudsman Program do?

- Educate residents, their family, and facility staff about residents' rights.
- Investigate and resolve complaints to improve residents' quality of life and care
- Represent residents' interests before governmental agencies
- Guide residents through the sometimes complex long-term care system

Staff Directory

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Executive Director
State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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Finance Manager

Lori Barbee

Administrative Assistant

Joanne West

Intake Worker

Nicole Marchesi

Volunteer Program Manager

Patricia Thorsen, LSW

Ombudsman Program Manager

Danielle Malcolm, LMSW

Home Care Ombudsman

Maria Woodward, LSW

Regional Ombudsman

Bre Chamberlain

Regional Ombudsman

Susan McKeen

Regional Ombudsman

Trinity Baker, LPN

Regional Ombudsman

Allison Knight, LSW

Transition Manager

Pamela Marshall

Outreach Specialist

Bethany Tompkins

Regional Ombudsman

Erica Golden, LSW

Regional Ombudsman

Christopher Allen

Regional Ombudsman

Please contact us if you need assistance.



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