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OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

By Jennifer L. Donohue, Esquire

Have you ever wondered where complaints about treatment received in a nursing home or other long-term care facility should be directed? The obvious answer is to the administrator of the facility or the director of nursing. But what if those individuals fail to address the issue?

The federal Older Americans Act (enacted by Congress in 1965) mandated the appointment of a Long-Term Care Ombudsman in every state to investigate and respond to complaints of abuse, neglect and exploitation of individuals age 60 years of age and older who reside in licensed long-term care facilities, both public and private. The role of the ombudsman is to support and empower consumers. Specifically, each state ombudsman: (1) receives and helps resolve individual complaints by or on behalf of consumers of long-term care services; and (2) aims to improve and enhance the long-term care system, its laws, regulations, policies and administration through public education.

In accordance with the Older Americans Act, the New Jersey legislature created the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly in 1977. Questions and complaints about resident care in the state of New Jersey can be directed to that office at the following address: Office of the Ombudsman, P.O. Box 807, Trenton, New Jersey, 08625-0807, or by calling 1-877-582-6995.

In Pennsylvania, the Ombudsman Program is administered by the local Areas on Aging. In addition to serving residents of long-term care facilities such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities and personal care homes, the role of the Ombudsman in Pennsylvania has been expanded to include advocacy for older consumers of any long-term care service, whether it is provided in an institution, a community setting or a private home. The address of the State Ombudsman's office is: Pennsylvania Department of Aging, Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, 555 Walnut Street, 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA, 17101-1919. You can also reach the office by calling (717) 783-7247.



Begley & Begley P.C. is a law firm that concentrates on Estate & Tax Planning, Elder Law, Estate Administration, Guardianship and Will Contests, Real Estate, as well as Medicaid Planning. We are based in Moorestown, NJ, with offices in Avalon and Lawrenceville.

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Our web site contains a library of firm newsletters, articles, on-line forms for Medicaid, Estate Planning and Guardianship, as well as our upcoming speaking engagements, our products, and other relevant information.

If you are interested in having an Elder Law Attorney from Begley & Begley speak at an event, please contact Laura Dickens at (856) 787-4233.

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