

Ombudsman Bulletin

AUGUST 2026

WELCOME NEW OMBUDSMAN INTERNS

- **Arleather Johnson** – Baton Rouge
- **La'Toi Burris-Perkins** - Baton Rouge
- **Danielle Sampson** - Alexandria

We are delighted you have joined our Ombudsman family. Your compassion and commitment to resident advocacy will strengthen our program and enrich the lives of Louisiana's long-term care residents. Welcome!

THANK YOU, CASANDRA

After six years of dedicated service, **Casandra Cesare**, Regional Ombudsman Coordinator with the Caddo Council on Aging, begins a new chapter. Casandra has been a respected advocate for residents, a trusted colleague, and a leader who helped build a strong regional Ombudsman team. Her professionalism, kindness, and commitment to resident-centered advocacy have left a lasting impact. We thank her for her years of service and wish her every happiness in the future.

“Once an ombudsman, always an ombudsman.”

OMBUDSMAN NEWS & NOTES

Older Americans Act Reauthorization Advances

The U.S. Senate has passed the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act, which now moves to the House. The Act provides the federal foundation for programs supporting older adults, including Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs, Area Agencies on Aging, Adult Protective Services, nutrition services, and caregiver supports.

Source: National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, Legislative & Policy Updates (July 2026)

CMS Reinforces Residents' Voting Rights

CMS recently issued updated guidance reminding nursing homes to protect every resident's right to vote free from interference or coercion. Residents have the right to choose who assists them with voting, and facilities must respect those choices.

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Quality, Safety & Oversight Memoranda (July 2026)

CMS Announces New Risk-Based Survey Process

Beginning September 8, CMS plans to implement a Risk-Based Survey process for certain high-performing nursing homes. Consumer Voice has expressed concern that shorter surveys may reduce opportunities to identify resident concerns. Ombudsmen should continue to observe carefully, document concerns, and advocate for residents regardless of a facility's survey status.

Source: CMS, Quality, Safety & Oversight Memoranda (July 2026); Consumer Voice Legislative & Policy Updates (July 2026)

OMBUDSMAN REMINDER

Every Visit Matters

Residents don't always share their concerns during the first visit - or even the fifth. Your consistent presence and careful listening may open the door to concerns that would otherwise never be voiced.

"How are things going today?"

Sometimes our greatest advocacy begins by simply listening.

COFFEE & CASES

Monday, August 3

We look forward to welcoming **Roni Land**, Regional Director with ARIA, who will discuss dental services available to nursing home residents.

Special thanks to **Carolyn Smith** for coordinating this month's guest speaker.

ONE THOUGHT BEFORE YOU GO...

Growing Older... Asking Better Questions

During a recent nursing home visit, I was chatting with an 84-year-old resident about growing older. I mentioned the familiar saying that age brings wisdom. He smiled and said,

"Growing old doesn't necessarily mean having all the answers. It means learning to ask better questions."

I've thought about those words many times since.

As ombudsmen, we don't always need every answer. Often, our most meaningful advocacy begins with thoughtful questions.

"How are you today?"

"What would you like?"

"Tell me more."

Perhaps wisdom isn't measured by the answers we give, but by the questions we ask.

Thank you for everything you do on behalf of Louisiana's long-term care residents.

Every visit matters.

Every conversation matters.

Every resident matters.

You matter!