

Ombuds Bulletin

April 2026

Empathy that moves us to respond —
steady, thoughtful, and intentional.

Recognition of Leadership

**Carolyn Smith**Ombudsman Regional Coordinator
Alexandria Region, CENLAAA**2026 Excellence in Advocacy Award recipient**
A steady presence and trusted advocate

At the 2026 LEADER Summit, Carolyn Smith was honored with the Excellence in Advocacy Award — the program's highest recognition for outstanding person-directed care.

With more than 35 years of service, Carolyn exemplifies compassionate advocacy, steady leadership, and an unwavering commitment to residents, families, and colleagues. Her work reflects the very best of the Ombudsman mission. We extend our sincere congratulations and appreciation.

Coffee & Cases: A Community of Practice

Thank you to all who join our monthly conversations. These gatherings strengthen not only our knowledge, but our connection to one another and to the work we share.

April's Coffee & Cases will be an open discussion, offering space to share questions, experiences, and insights from the field.

We are pleased to welcome new interns and volunteers and look forward to introducing them.

Meet them all during our April Coffee & Cases.

Join us: Monday, April 6, 2026 | 9:30 AM | Zoom

National Volunteer Month

A Steady Presence, A Lasting Impact

April is National Volunteer Month — a time to recognize those who give their time, attention, and heart in service to others.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program extends appreciation to all who serve as volunteers, including our dedicated volunteer ombudsmen across Louisiana.

Volunteers are trusted listeners, careful observers, and compassionate advocates. Their work is often quiet — a conversation, a question, a concern brought forward — but the impact is lasting.

With appreciation for their time, care, and commitment, we thank our volunteers.

Compassion in Action

Empathy that moves us to respond

Advocacy begins with understanding and grows stronger when understanding becomes action.

Program Updates

The Calcasieu Council on Aging (COA) welcomes new ombudsman team members:

Shelly Young

Regional Ombudsman Coordinator

Shalonda (Shae) LaSalle

Ombudsman

We are pleased to welcome them and look forward to their contributions in strengthening advocacy and support for residents in the region.

Compassion in Practice

Where empathy becomes action

Empathy allows us to understand what another person may be feeling.

Compassion asks: What can I do to help?

In long-term care, compassion is often expressed through steady, thoughtful response.

- A resident is heard.
- A family member is guided.
- A staff member is supported.

When we respond with intention, we help resolve concerns in ways that preserve dignity, relationships, and trust.

A Simple Reminder

For many residents, what matters most is not only what is done — but how it is done.

- A respectful tone
- A moment of eye contact
- A pause long enough to let someone feel heard

These are acts of compassion.

And they are within reach, every day.

Compassion, quite simply, is empathy in action.

Compassion does not replace advocacy — it strengthens it.