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Long Term Care Residents Encouraged to Speak Out

Carson City, NV – October is National Resident Rights Month which was established by The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care to bring attention to residents living in long term care facilities. This year's theme, **Speak Out Against Elder Abuse**, encourages residents and others to be educated about, and speak out against, elder abuse. During the month of October the Nevada Long Term Care Ombudsman Program will make visits to long term care facilities to educate and empower residents, their loved ones, or witnesses of elder abuse, to use their voice to speak out against this serious issue.

A critical component of the Long Term Care Ombudsman program is the partnership between staff and volunteers. The Ombudsman program relies on its volunteers to be a regular presence in long term care facilities. Their constant vigilance helps ensure residents are properly treated and creates the capability to immediately report concerns. During the month of October, Nevadans are encouraged to volunteer for the Long Term Care Ombudsman program to establish a critical network of monitoring and communication.

Not just in October, but throughout the year, to report a concern about a resident in a long term care facility, contact the State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program at 1-888-729-0571. For information about volunteering, contact Sue Levinsky in Southern Nevada at 702-486-3544 or Jennifer Williams in Northern Nevada at 775-688-2964 ext 237.

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Background: Nevada's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) was established under federal mandate through the Older American's Act to improve the quality of care in America's nursing homes. The role of the Ombudsman is to resolve problems of individual residents as well as to bring about changes at the local, state and national levels. Ombudsmen receive more than 50 hours of initial training and receive ongoing annual training in order to stay in touch with best care practices in the industry.

The LTCOP receives complaints regarding a resident's situation and works with the resident to resolve the complaint. This is accomplished by working with residents and family members to speak out when they have concerns, advocating for resident needs through legislation and changes in facility practice, and collaborating with other state agencies to improve the quality of care in facility settings.

When the grievance involves violations of an operational regulation the Ombudsmen refer the matter to the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health for investigation. If the matter involves an elder abuse issue the matter is referred to the Elder Protective Service Program who will investigate and work with law enforcement to pursue criminal prosecution when abuse has occurred. Ombudsmen are not able to fine or sanction any long-term care facility and rely on advocacy to address concerns.

There are 522 licensed long term care facilities throughout the State of Nevada with room for 12,755 residents. Last year the Ombudsman Program, made up of 9.5 Ombudsmen staff, investigated 750 complaints and provided information to 11,981 residents to protect against abuses or capricious acts. In addition, the Ombudsman Program conducted 116 trainings for facility staff on topics ranging from resident rights to customer service and attended 244 resident council meetings where residents are empowered to organize and speak up for their rights and correct problems.