



John K. Holton, Ph.D., Director

One Natural Resources Way, Suite 100, Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
Phone: 217-785-3356, Fax: 217-785-4477, Web: www.state.il.us/aging

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 22, 2012

CONTACT:

Kimberly Parker 312.814.1577

State Calls Attention to the Residents of Long-Term Care in Observance of *Residents Rights Month*

Department on Aging program protects and defends residents rights

SPRINGFIELD - October 22, 2012. With respect to the month long Residents' Rights observance, Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., says the department works to make sure that residents living in long term care facilities are not forgotten, are safe and receive quality care.

"In addition to providing services for older adults to remain living in their homes and communities, the department's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program serves as advocates for residents of long term care facilities," said Director Holton. "We have to lend our support to ensure all nursing home residents are safe and that their voices are heard. The Ombudsmen oftentimes become the voice for residents and are their most trusted advocate".

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care started the Residents' Rights observance in 1981 to highlight the importance of resident focused care.

While the Department of Public Health handles regulation, licensing and inspections of long term care facilities, the Ombudsman Program serves as another safeguard. Ombudsmen assist, empower, represent, and intervene on behalf of the more than 100,000 residents in skilled and intermediate licensed facilities, supportive living facilities, and assisted living and shared housing establishments. Ombudsmen inform residents and their families of their rights; resolve complaints or issues; provide information on resident's needs and concerns to their families, facility staff and their community; and provide support for the resident's individualized care, which is also referred to as person centered care.

"Residents living in long term care facilities are the vulnerable population. Resolving complaint investigations continue to be our number one priority of ombudsman service. We want to know they are getting the best care and are treated with dignity which are the basic standards for a resident's quality of life," said State Ombudsman Sally Petrone.

In 2009, Governor Pat Quinn formed the Nursing Home Task Force to examine state procedures and industry practices in order to ensure all Illinois nursing home residents are safe and receive the treatment appropriate for their condition. The task force's efforts led to historic legislation through Senate Bill 326 (Public Act 096-1372) which ultimately will transform the Illinois nursing home system.

For more information about programs and services to help older adults and their families, contact the Department on Aging's Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966, or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.

###