1. **What is the time commitment required of Certified Ombudsman volunteers? Do they sometimes need more than that to do the job? What do the required hours include?**

Per Oregon statutes, volunteers are asked to commit to approximately 16 hours per month when they can be available at times to meet the resident’s needs, *mostly during weekday business hours*. Ideally this would include visiting residents, follow up phone calls, reporting and travel to/from facilities. There are times when volunteers do spend more time on a particular case or resident, but there is flexibility when you volunteer. You can set your own schedule and we ask that volunteers do not make visits at the same time, or on the same day of the week. Some volunteers donate much more time to the program, but the average is 5-8 hours a week. We request a one-year commitment to the program following initial training. Volunteers can request a leave of absence for vacations, illness or other personal matters. You may need to retrain depending on the length of time away as a volunteer.

2. **What kind of authority does a Certified Ombudsman have at his/her facility?**

Once volunteers complete their background check, training, and pass their exam, they are certified as representatives of the State of Oregon to fulfill their Ombudsman duties. They have statutory authority to go into their assigned facility at any time, and advocate for the rights and dignity of the resident. Additionally, Certified Ombudsmen (CO’s) are sometimes asked to do a back up to a facility where no CO is assigned and are entitled to the same access rights.

3. **How does a Certified Ombudsman begin the advocacy work and introduce him/herself to the residents in the facilities to which he/she is assigned?**

Certified Ombudsmen are issued a name badge and will have a letter of introduction sent to their assigned facility. The Ombudsman will visit the residents and establish a relationship with them. (Typically the Ombudsman will knock on the residents’ door, and introduce himself or herself to the resident. The specifics are left up to the volunteers, as everyone’s style is different. The goal is to inform the resident that the Ombudsman is there to advocate for the resident.) It may take a few visits for the residents to understand and trust the Ombudsman before bringing any concerns to them (this is part of why we request a long-term volunteer commitment of at least one year). Information regarding communicating with the elderly, staff, and families as well as case studies are presented at training.
4. **How is an Ombudsman assigned to facilities? Is assignment to facilities that are close to the volunteer's home a priority?**

CO's are assigned using two main factors: where we have a need for volunteers and the volunteers' preference. If the volunteer would prefer to have an assignment close to them we'll make every effort as long as there's a facility available. However, some volunteers prefer to visit a facility near where they may already travel or in another community.

5. **“If I work at facility or have a family member residing in a facility is this a potential conflict of interest?”**

A conflict of interest may exist when:

(a) A person or a member of the person’s immediate family has any financial or ownership interests in a long-term care facility or is employed by a long-term care facility;  
(b) A person is an employee, agent, or officer of an Area Agency on Aging, type B, or the local state office of the Senior and Disabled Services Division;  
(c) A person has been employed by a long-term care facility within the last 2-years.

6. **When do trainings take place? Where are they held? What topics are covered in each session? What kind of test is given at the end?**

Trainings generally take place once a month, scheduled around the state (the specific training schedule can be found on our website at www.oregon.gov/LTCO). Training consists of 5 in-class days, spread over two to three weeks, and a facility visit with another staff member or volunteer mentor. Training topics covered include principals of advocacy, resident rights, medical terms, types of facilities, rules and regulations, communication and negotiation. Volunteers are given a great deal of resource information and are not expected to memorize it, but rather to know where to find the information and how to apply it. An open book, take home exam is given for the volunteer to return before being certified. Volunteers can expect to begin actively volunteering with residents about 30 days after completing day five of training.

7. **What is the role of the deputies? Do all of the deputies or just one supervise volunteers?**

There are Deputy State Long-Term Care Ombudsmen who are assigned to geographic areas of the state and who manage our toll free complaint hotline and training program. The deputies act as a coach and resource for the CO’s, as well as provide additional support in
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difficult cases. Monthly team meetings are provided by the deputy assigned to the region and offer the Ombudsmen an opportunity to interact with other volunteers, receive continuing education and discuss cases. You can view the bios of our staff and a current district map on our website.

8. Who directs the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, and how was that person chosen? What is their background?

The Oregon Long-Term Care State Ombudsman is appointed by the Governor for a four-year term from a list of candidates brought forward by various agencies and entities involved in the field of aging in Oregon. Besides being the agency director, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman also advises the Governor and Legislature on long-term care issues. You can find out more about the State Ombudsman on our website.

9. What are the most common complaints from facility residents, and how are they normally handled?

The most common complaints are about food quality, call lights not being answered, needs of the resident being unmet, billing problems, and medication errors. The most current top ten complaints can be found on the LTCO website. If the matter can be resolved within the facility, the CO works with the staff and administration with the primary goal being to protect the rights and dignity of the resident. The role of the CO is not to make decisions or create an adversarial environment but to effectively advocate for what the resident wants.

10. What is the typical day of an Ombudsman like?

A typical day would include visiting a facility and meeting with the residents, or following up on a previous case with phone calls made from home, or meeting with facility staff. Volunteers have a great deal of discretion over when and where they make their facility visits, so a typical day can be flexible more than anything else!

11. When and where are the monthly support group meetings? Who chairs them, and what topics are covered? Is there additional training?

The monthly support group meetings are typically held for two hours each month, ten months of the year. The location and time varies depending on the area and availability of the volunteers and staff. However, most meetings are on a set schedule. (i.e. The second Thursday of every month.) The Deputy for that area will lead the meeting and topics covered might be changes in laws or regulations, new research on aging, presentations about
community resources, and the like. If resources allow there is a statewide training event annually which substitutes for a monthly team meeting. In addition, statewide Webinar trainings may be held in lieu of a monthly team meeting.

11. What are the requirements for continuing education, and how can they be met?

Continuing education is presented at the monthly support group meetings, or volunteers can suggest an opportunity they can attend on their own with approval from a Deputy.

12. How many Certified Ombudsmen are there currently in Oregon?

Generally there are 160 - 180 volunteers statewide, but we are always in need of more, especially in rural areas such as the Oregon Coast, Willamette Valley, and Eastern Oregon.

13. How long has the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) program been in existence?

The LTCO program has been in existence since the 1960's nationally as a result of the Older Americans Act. Every state has an Ombudsman program but they are structured differently. The program began in Oregon in 1981.

14. How many people are served each year by the LTCO program?

Every year we make over 13,000 visits to residents in licensed long-term care facilities. These are a combination of responses to complaints or concerns made to our office or regular unannounced visits. Of those 13,000, over 80 percent of those visits were made by volunteers across the state. Local volunteers are the key to timely visits and effective advocacy.

15. How many people are in LTC in Oregon?

There are approximately 45,000 residents in Long-term care facilities around the state. These facilities include nursing homes, residential care facilities, assisted living facilities, and adult foster care homes. Specific information can be found on our website.