

# Tips for Ombudsman Program Communication

with Residents, Long-Term Care Facilities, Families,  
and the Public During COVID-19

*(abridged from original tip sheet)*

## Connect with Residents

- Routinely request contact information for residents and resident representatives, including contact information for Resident and Family Council leadership. Establish regular contact with Resident and Family Council leadership and call/email other residents and resident representatives as often as possible.
  - Ask residents if they have access to a computer, tablet, or smart phone, and if they are interested in video calls.
  - Ask residents if they have email addresses and if they would like to receive email updates or correspond through email.
  - Ask residents if they prefer that you contact their representative for ongoing communication.
- Contact Resident Council leadership in each facility on a regular basis.
- Contact residents and family members that were complainants in recent cases (prior to the visitation restrictions) to check in to see if they have current concerns and let them know the Ombudsman program is still available.
- Receive, investigate, and resolve complaints via phone, email, and video calls.
- Coordinate “window visits” with residents so you can communicate through a window or other designated space at the facility while you are outside the building but can still see and hear them. Speak with the facility about their process for visits and how they will ensure resident access. Programs have successfully used phones and other communication devices to make it easier to talk to each through windows. One program uses baby monitors so the receiver can be set up in the resident’s room without staff or the resident having to hold it during the conversation.
- Set-up an Ombudsman program table or space during outdoor visitation time so you are available to speak with residents and their visitors.

## Conversation Starters

Consider developing a script with talking points and questions to use during routine calls to residents and their representatives to offer support and answer questions or concerns.

Here are some example questions to use as conversation starters with residents after you introduce yourself, the program, and the purpose for your call. Share your contact information with each resident and encourage them to share it with their family members or other residents.

How are you?

Are your needs being met?

Do staff respond promptly when you use your call light or ask for assistance?

Have you noticed any changes that concern you?

Are you receiving your medications on time?

How are your meals?

Have you been able to communicate with your friends or family or other community members?

Do you have access to a computer, tablet, or a smart phone?

Are you interested in video calls?

Is there anything you can think of that would help you communicate with your loved ones better?

Do you have any questions or concerns?

Would you like to correspond by email if you have an email address?

Would you like for me to contact you or your representative for on-going communication?