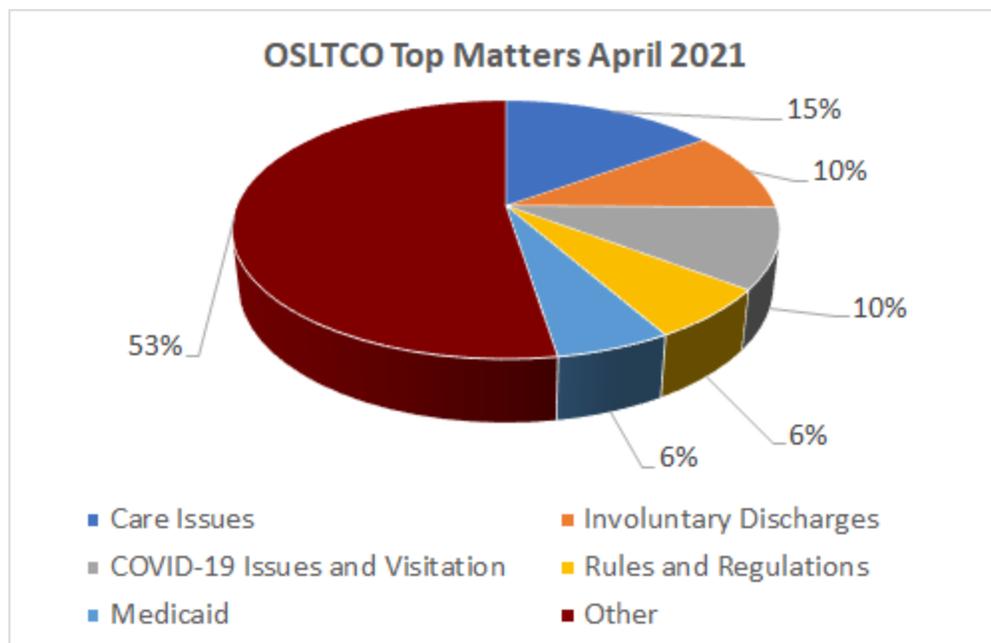


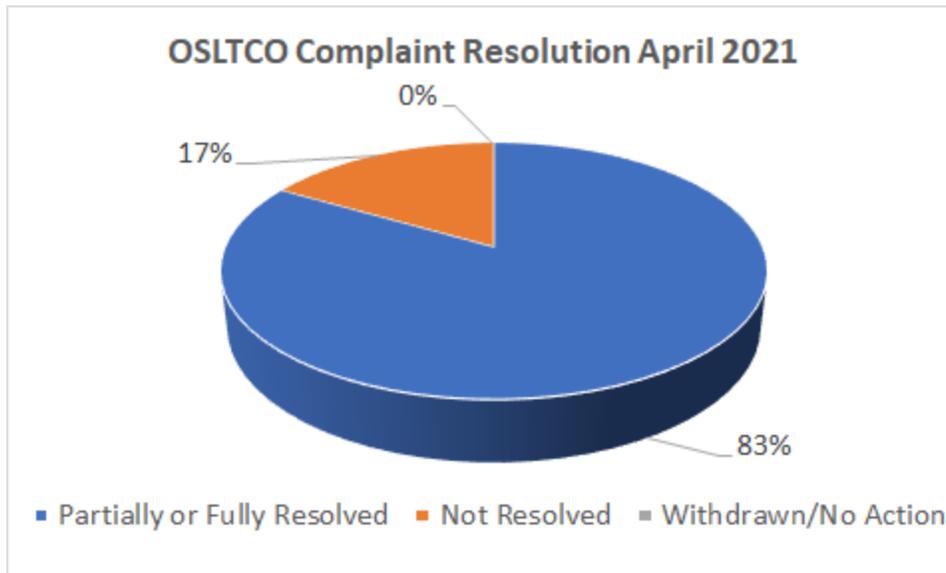
Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Monthly Report

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) is a federally mandated state office that provides advocacy for Iowans living in the long term care settings of nursing facilities, residential care facilities, assisted living facilities and elder group homes. The Iowa OSLTCO includes the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman program (LLTCO), the Volunteer Ombudsman Program (VOP), an Empowerment Specialist and the Managed Care Ombudsman Program (MCOP). Currently, Iowa Department on Aging, Assistant Director Brian Majeski is serving as the Interim State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. The Iowa Department on Aging has the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman position posted on the Iowa Department of Administrative Services [website](#).

In this monthly report, data is being provided on activities of the LLTCO program for complaints, actions and resolution of matters brought to the OSLTCO by long-term care residents and tenants for April 2021.



As COVID-19 vaccines take effect, care issues have risen as the top matter that the OSLTCO looked into this past month. The top five matters depicted above, including COVID-19 matters, encompass a total of 47% of all of the matters the OSLTCO looked into during April 2021. Involuntary discharges, the national health emergency of COVID-19 issues and visiting in a long-term care facility, rules and regulations for long-term care facilities and Medicaid were the top matters looked into by the LLTCO. In April 2021, one nursing facility was still reporting COVID-19 outbreak.



During the month of April the OSLTCO was able to partially or fully resolve 83% of reported complaints to the satisfaction of the resident/tenant.

COVID-19 Related Matters

The lives of long-term care residents have been impacted possibly more than any other segments of the population since the beginning of the pandemic. Fear of catching the virus is lessening slightly with the development of a vaccine. The majority of residents/tenants have been offered the opportunity to be vaccinated while there are some who have refused. Systems are being developed now to keep the vaccinated and unvaccinated residents/tenants safe and able to co-exist safely. Residents were subjected to multiple, abrupt room changes when outbreaks occurred in their facilities, personal items were misplaced, some not located, doctor appointments were primarily done virtually, outside visitors were not allowed in the facilities and many felt as if they did not have any rights at all. As the OSLTCO and long-term care facilities continue to navigate through the pandemic, expectations of returning entirely to life as previously known are fading. What will not change is protecting the rights of Iowans living in long-term care facilities and the advocacy efforts of the Iowa OSLTCO.

Visitation

Visitation guidelines have been updated with much more opportunity for indoor visitation between residents/tenants and guests while still adhering to safe infection prevention practices. Screening of everyone who enters the facility continues with only those persons displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or having close contact with someone with COVID-19 infection in the prior 14 days are denied entry to the facility. This is regardless of the visitor's vaccination status. Indoor visitation should occur at all times and for all residents/tenants regardless of vaccination status, except for a few circumstances when visitation should be limited due to a high risk of COVID-19 transmission. These guidelines are clearly stated in the updated CMS [QSO-20-39-NH](#). The LLTCO and Certified Volunteer Ombudsman are resuming visitation in nursing facilities at this time. Please contact the office for details of how to contact your LLTCO or VO.

One of the LLTCO was contacted by a family member who was upset that she was not allowed to visit with her mother in her room and observe the skilled therapy she was receiving. The LLTCO advocated for the daughter and mother to have daily, in-room visits and the daughter was able to share very important health information with the physical therapist who used the information to modify her mother's treatment plan. The family shared their appreciation in an email to the LLTCO.

"We are very appreciative of these accommodations, which, hopefully, will help our mother continue on a positive path to rehabilitation and a return to her home soon. We also recognize that none of the adjustments

would have taken place without your intervention, for which we're extremely grateful. In the meantime, I'm sitting with my mother in her room, thanks to your intervention yesterday. Thank you SO, so much!!"

Care Issues

For the first time since initiation of this report, concerns regarding residents' care have surpassed those related to visitation. As more family members and friends are able to visit their loved ones in person, they are noting many concerns regarding their care during the pandemic. Family members are learning that their loved ones have developed pressure areas and wounds and not all of them received change of status notification from the facility staff prior to their visit. In some cases, family members are learning that their loved one has not been receiving baths or showers on a regular basis. Their loved one may be wearing the same clothes for multiple days in a row, their hair is greasy and uncombed, fingernails and toenails are not being trimmed and are dirty and body odor is present. Some residents are reporting that the call lights are not being answered promptly and there are instances when the staff comes into the room, turns the call light off and leaves before performing the necessary cares.

In addition to resident/tenant hygiene concerns there are environmental concerns. There are reports of linens being in short supply or in very poor condition. Beds are not always made daily. Rooms and common areas of the facility are not as clean as they were pre-pandemic and unpleasant odors are present in the buildings. Residents are stating that they are not getting proper exercise and activities at times. Residents have asked to have care plan meetings with the staff only to find out that the care plan was held earlier without their input. Residents and family members have reached out to the LLTCO to assist with discharge planning when they are not receiving the assistance from the staff they request. Dietary concerns have been voiced with residents stating there is little variety in the menu and meals are not served at proper temperatures. Some residents have experienced significant weight loss during the pandemic. The OSLTCO works closely with the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, Health Facilities Division by making referrals to them when necessary if the issue is of regulatory significance.

Involuntary Discharges

Facilities continue to issue involuntary discharges related to behavioral issues. The Governor's Public Health Emergency declaration continues to mandate a stay for involuntary discharges related to non-payment for residents of nursing facilities and residential care facilities and continues through May 30, 2021. There have been instances of nursing facilities sending residents to the hospital related to behavioral issues and then refusing to voluntarily accept them back to the nursing facility and residents have reached out to the LLTCO for assistance in returning to the nursing facility. Many residents are not aware of the process that nursing facilities are required to follow and their right to appeal an involuntary discharge.

Resident/Tenant Rights

Resident rights have not changed during the pandemic and remain the focus of advocacy for the OSLTCO. Some of the waivers that were implemented by CMS in the early days of the pandemic have been removed. Residents, once again, must be notified prior to a room change. A nursing facility resident reached out to the LLTCO after experiencing multiple room changes during the pandemic. She was moved to her permanent room with a new roommate. The resident and her roommate were not compatible, but the resident stated that she would be asked to move if she complained because that was the policy. After trying several interventions in an attempt to make the situation work, it became obvious that the two residents were not compatible. The LLTCO worked with the resident and staff and changes were made to benefit both of the residents. The resident and her family were very appreciative of the assistance. Residents/tenants have the right to voice concerns without the fear of retaliation and any form of retaliation should not be tolerated. The LLTCO and VO will visit with residents and share ideas on exercising their rights on their own or with assistance.