

From the Executive Director



Typically, this letter comes to you as a wrap up of all of the wonderful things that VOYCE volunteers and staff did last year. But right now, as COVID-19 hits long-term care communities harder than anyone else, what we're doing now seems leaps and bounds more pressing.

As I write this, our first case in a long-term care community in our service area which includes St. Louis and the surrounding counties as well as Northeast Missouri all the way to Iowa was confirmed. By the time this letter reaches your mailbox, there will be more.

Early in the crisis, long-term care communities shut their doors to all visitors to protect their residents from this invasion as directed by the federal government. Despite not being able to visit with residents in person, ombudsmen STILL work to ensure the safety of all residents. Telephone calls, while nobody's first choice to do this work that truly depends on personal visits and slowly built trust, keep staff and volunteers connected to communities and their residents.

Last year, ombudsmen handled 1514 cases of complaints about quality of care. These ranged from call lights not being answered in a timely manner to not receiving medicines to not receiving the proper foods. In 205 other cases, ombudsmen dealt with the toughest subjects: abuse, neglect, and exploitation of those who live in long-term care in our community. The other 1057 cases covered everything from improper discharges, resident rights, family and guardian disputes, and assistance in navigating the long-term care system.

To be clear, even in the very best, five-star community, problems unfold.

Initially, when the long-term care communities closed their doors, I thought, "Whew, they're safer now." And then I remembered the 2776 total grievances from last year and the 596 from January and February of 2020. Just because a community is closed to visitors and outside contractors, doesn't mean problems cease.

An ombudsman today not only helps resident navigate the challenges they typically face, but the new threat that COVID-19 brings to their doorstep. That means your support is more vital today than ever.

Because of that, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and our workforce of volunteers and staff stay strong. We will keep speaking up for every one of the people living in the over 300 communities VOYCE serves, whether we can visit in person or not.

Because of you, we will be their VOYCE.

Yours in Service,
Marjorie Moore, Executive Director

2019 in Review

14,426 individuals Served
21 Missouri Counties
35 Volunteer Ombudsmen
9 VOYCE Employees

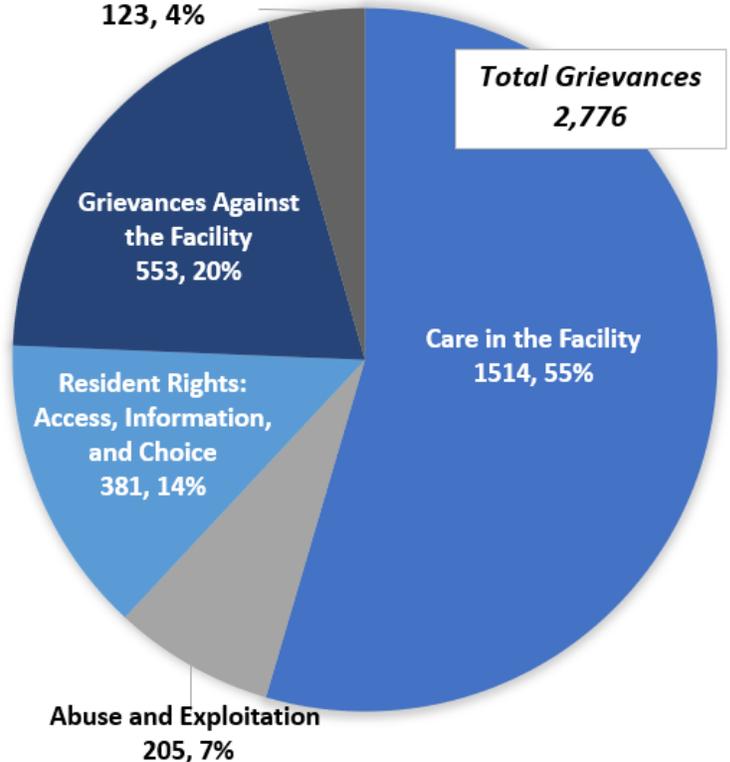


2,394.28

*Total hours served by
volunteer ombudsmen*

2,233 (80.4%)
*Grievances resolved with help
from VOYCE*

Non-Facility Grievances
123, 4%



1,611

*Individuals who received
information and resources
about long-term care options
through VOYCEconnect*