Process Evaluation and Special Studies Related to the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP)

Interview Protocol for Federal Staff

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

ORGANIZATION:

INTERVIEW DATE:
RESPONDENT:
TITLE:
INTERVIEWER(S):

Interview Topics

- **A.** Background Information
- **B.** Strategic Partnerships
- **C.** Structure and Program Context
- **D.** Program Resources and Activities
- **E.** Program Quality Assurance

Introduction/Purpose of the Study

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

My name is _____ and I'm a researcher from _____. I'm here today because the Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging (ACL/AoA) has contracted with NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) to conduct a national evaluation of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP). The aim of the evaluation is to study the LTCOP's structure and operations, use of resources to carry out legislative mandates, the nature of partnerships, and processes for sharing information on program practices.

As part of this evaluation, we are conducting interviews with Federal staff that will cover topics including the LTCOP's strategic partnerships, program structure and context, program resources and activities, and program quality assurance activities. These interviews will provide important information on the implementation of the LTCOP and enable ACL/AoA to better understand how the program works at the national, state, and local levels. We will use what we learn from these interviews to provide ACL/AoA with practical and policy-relevant insight into LTCOP services and processes.

Informed Consent Statement *[Interviewer must read this.]*

Before beginning the interview, I (we) want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and emphasize that your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to respond to any question that you do not wish to answer. The interview should take about **60 minutes** and is not part of an audit or a compliance review. We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about the LTCOP's implementation.

In addition, I want to let you know that although we will take notes during this interview, information is never repeated with the name of the respondent in any reports or in any discussions with supervisors, colleagues, or ACL/AoA. When we write the report and discuss our findings, information from all the people we speak with is compiled and presented so that no individual can be identified.

To help me accurately report on the information you share, it would be helpful if I could tape record this interview. I can also turn off the recorder at any point if you want me to. I do not have the recorder on now; is it okay with you for me to turn it on?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Do I have your permission to begin the interview?

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We'd like to begin by asking you a few questions about your position and relationship with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP).

1. What is your current position at the Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging (ACL/AoA)? Can you describe your role and responsibilities in relation to the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program?

2. To what extent do you interact with other ACL/AoA divisions to support the ombudsman program? Can you describe this relationship?
   Probes:
   a. What are their roles?
   b. In what capacity do you work with them?

B. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Next, we'd like to discuss the LTCOP's partners and their role in supporting the program.

1. To what extent does the Office of LTCO Programs partner with other Federal agencies on joint initiatives? How do you work together?
   Probes:
   a. Does the Office of LTCOP have MOUs with other Federal agencies or federally funded programs? If so, can you describe them?
   b. What kind of information and/or TA is distributed to partners?

2. To what extent does the Office of LTCO Programs work with other offices or units within ACL that administer protection and advocacy systems (e.g., PAIMI)? Can you describe the nature of these relationships?

3. What other non-Federal partners are involved in implementing the LTCOP at the national level (e.g., National Ombudsman Resource Center, NASOP, NALLTCO, etc.)? What are their roles in relation to those of ACL?

4. What are the benefits of these partnerships?

5. Have you experienced any challenges with your organizational partnerships? For example, are there challenges coordinating across organizations?

6. How can your organizational partnerships be enhanced to improve program effectiveness and efficiency?

7. Are there other stakeholders that would be helpful to partner with?

8. Do you participate in any national coalitions? Can you describe these relationships and the value they bring to the LTCOP?

C. STRUCTURE AND PROGRAM CONTEXT

Next, we'd like to discuss the program's structure and the context in which it operates.

1. To what extent does the newly authorized Older Americans Act provide sufficient guidance and authority to the LTCOP at the Federal and State levels? What areas, if any, would benefit from further clarification?

2. How will implementation of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Final Rule affect programs (positively or negatively)?

3. What potential challenges do programs face in implementing the Final Rule?

4. Does ACL play a role in ensuring that programs align with the Final Rule? If so, what is ACL's role?

5. Are there any instances when state laws and regulations concerning the LTCOP conflict with Federal law and regulations? If so, what are they?

6. What Federal and State laws, policies and regulations affect the long-term care environment in which the ombudsman program operates? For example, have changes in Medicare, Medicaid, or home and community-based services impacted program operations and the types of issues that residents experience?

7. How do these laws, policies, or regulations that you mentioned affect the design and implementation of the ombudsman program currently and/or do you expect them to affect the program in the future?

8. Are there any trends or changes in the long-term care landscape that affect ombudsman program operations? For example, these may relate to nursing home and assisted living industry trends, changes in long-term

care delivery and financing such as managed care, or demographic changes.
>   *Probe:*
>   a. How is ACL preparing the ombudsman program to meet these challenges?

D. PROGRAM RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

Next, we'd like to discuss the ombudsman program's resources, activities, strengths, and challenges.

1. What is your relationship with state ombudsman programs? Can you describe these relationships?

2. On an annual basis, how often do you interact with…
   a. State Units on Aging (i.e., OAA grantees)?
   b. State LTC Ombudsmen and their staff?
   c. Representatives of the Offices at the local level?

3. In the last year, what topics did you discuss with state programs (e.g., regulations, policies and procedures, NORS data, etc.)?
   a. Is this communication standard across all state programs (e.g., general webinars or meetings, or documents) or based on case-by-case need or inquiries?

4. What is your relationship with local ombudsman programs? Can you describe these relationships?

5. To what extent do existing program resources enable LTCOPs to fulfill their Federal mandates? Are resources sufficient to meet the program's requirements?
   Probe:
   a. Is program funding sufficient?
       i. If not, in what ways is it insufficient?
       ii. What would an adequately funded and supported program look like?
   b. Is program staffing by volunteers or paid staff sufficient?
       i. If not, in what ways, or on what levels (Federal, State, local) is it insufficient?
   c. Do programs have adequate access to quality legal counsel?
   d. What type of guidance is provided to programs that are unable to fulfill their Federal mandates?

e. What type of guidance is provided to programs to support their systems advocacy efforts?

6. To what extent are Federal resources distributed efficiently?
   a. Are there particular things that work well or need improvement in terms of the distribution of Federal resources?

7. What are the most significant challenges facing the ombudsman program's ability to fulfill all of its duties under the OAA (e.g., additional state mandates, service provision to board and care homes, conflicts of interest with other state agencies)?

8. What resources do you consider to be the highest priority for investment? What investments would result in the greatest difference for program recipients?

9. What is your role in long-term care advocacy?

10. What do you see as the most important <u>individual resident advocacy</u> issues for the ombudsman program to address right now?

11. What do you see as the most important <u>systems advocacy</u> issues for the ombudsman program to address right now?

12. Thinking about promising state and local practices, what successes best illustrate the value of the ombudsman program?

E. PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE

Lastly, we want to understand how the LTCOP ensures that high-quality services are delivered.

1. How do you monitor or assess the quality of the state LTCO programs' performance?
   Probes:
   a. Is NORS data used to assess quality? How?
   b. What other metrics are used to assess quality?
   c. Are the type and frequency of program monitoring sufficient/effective?
   d. What does ACL see as its role in ensuring programs comply with federal laws and regulations? What does it do if a program is found to be out of compliance?

2. To what extent are NORS data able to adequately capture the program's performance and impact?
   Probes:
   a. What steps can be taken to improve the quality and utility of the data?

3. How does ACL use NORS data for program planning and improvement? Does ACL use the data to examine trends or identify issues of concern as well as promising practices? If so, how?

4. Does ACL use NORS data for other purposes?
   Probes:
   a. Are NORS data used to promote awareness of the program?
   b. Does ACL share NORS data with other Federal agencies, Congress, the media, state programs, etc.?

5. To what extent does ACL inform state programs' goals or process for goal setting? Does ACL have priorities that are communicated to programs? If so, how are these communicated?

6. How does ACL support ombudsman programs to engage in continuous quality improvement?

7. What kind of feedback do state ombudsmen receive about their program's performance? How frequently does this occur and in what format?

8. How does ACL identify and prioritize needed training and technical assistance?

9. How does ACL coordinate with the National Ombudsman Resource Center to provide the training and technical assistance that programs need?
   a. How does ACL identify and prioritize what resources and projects NORC will work on?

10. In the last year, what topics did programs most frequently request for training and technical assistance?
    a. Are there TA topics that ACL has not been able to address? If so, what are they and why not?

11.   What is your overall assessment of the quality of the training and technical assistance provided by the National Ombudsman Resource Center?
   a. Are there areas that the National Ombudsman Resource Center does particularly well?
   b. Are there areas of training and technical assistance that can be improved (e.g., methods for reaching programs, content, etc.)?

12.   Is there any topic or issue that you would like us to know about? Please describe the issue(s) and explain why you think it is/they are important.

Thank you for your participation.