

Joani Latimer, M.S., Gerontology
State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Following multiple roles dedicated to providing services and advocacy for older adults and their caregivers, Joani began serving as Virginia's State Long-Term Ombudsman in 2000. In that role, she leads the statewide program that advocates on behalf of recipients of long-term care services, including those residing in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, as well as those receiving community-based care and services. With the Program's federal and state mandates setting out a broad role for the program in protecting the health, safety, welfare, and rights of long-term care recipients, the Ombudsman Program advocates on behalf of recipients themselves to address their concerns on both an individual and systems level. It empowers LTC recipients to understand and exercise their rights, providing client-directed assistance and support in resolving problems with care, services, and the exercise of their rights. The Program works with partners at the regional, state and national levels to promote laws and policies that seek to improve the quality of long-term care and enhance quality of life for LTC recipients.

“This program is not simply about investigating and resolving care problems – as important as that is. It is also about working with recipients, their loved ones, and many other stakeholders to build systems of care that promote human dignity and help each individual attain and sustain quality of life throughout the journey.”

Prior to becoming Virginia's State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Joani served with multiple non-profit organizations providing services and advocacy for older adults and their caregivers. She has had the opportunity to serve on a wide variety of state and national boards and commissions addressing long-term care quality and promoting the rights of older adults and persons with disabilities. About her role as the state's Ombudsman, she cites her gratitude for the opportunity to work daily on what has been a lifelong passion – promoting dignity, respect, and quality of life for our long-term care recipients.