

Silver Panther Newsletter

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IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Legislative Update

Page 3

Got COLA? Get PNA Raised! Initiative

Page 8

Celebrating Jeanette Sullivan Martinez

Page 15

Reintroduce the *Essential Caregivers Act*

Page 18

Hello and thank you for taking the time to read this edition of the “Silver Panther”, a newsletter brought to you by the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils (SCPRC) and The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP).

This Newsletter is designed to keep you abreast of the current issues that affect you, the residents of Connecticut nursing facilities.

We invite you to contact us with suggestions of articles you would like to see in future issues, or best practices your facility is using. You may contact us through Email at LTCOP@CT.GOV or by telephone at [1-866-388-1888](tel:1-866-388-1888).



Legislative Update



2025 Connecticut Legislative Session Overview

The 2025 Connecticut Legislative Session, which ran from January 8 to June 4, closed with notable progress for long-term care services and supports. The General Assembly advanced legislation that directly strengthens protections for individuals residing in nursing homes, residential care homes (RCHs), and assisted living facilities. This session underscored the legislature's commitment to upholding dignity, safety, and quality of life for individuals receiving long-term care, while addressing longstanding systemic challenges and emerging needs.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program's (LTCOP) legislative priorities centered on advancing resident rights, improving discharge and transfer protections, strengthening oversight and transparency, and ensuring fair treatment in care settings. In alignment with these goals, lawmakers enacted several measures that expand anti-discrimination



protections, reinforce safeguards for residents during facility closures and discharges, and create new pathways for education, empowerment, and emergency preparedness.

Key Legislative Gains for Long-Term Care

This session produced several landmark laws that will have a lasting impact on long-term care in Connecticut. Public Act 25-17 prohibits discrimination in nursing homes and managed residential communities, protecting residents from differential treatment on the basis of race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, and other characteristics. Facilities are now required to prominently post non-discrimination notices and ensure staff complete biennial cultural competency training, helping to foster more inclusive and respectful environments for all residents.

Public Act 25-154 extends similar anti-discrimination requirements to all licensed healthcare providers, including long-term care facilities, and establishes such conduct as a discriminatory practice under state law. These laws collectively signal a significant step forward in guaranteeing equitable care and affirming the rights of individuals in care settings.

Lawmakers also took action to enhance oversight, accountability, and emergency preparedness across the long-term care system. Public Act 25-96 strengthens the Department of Public Health's regulatory authority over nursing homes, RCHs, and assisted living service agencies (ALSAs), increasing penalties for substantial violations and expanding licensing enforcement. At the same time, Public Act 25-16 establishes a residential care home evacuation working group and reinforces discharge protections in both nursing homes and RCHs, ensuring



residents' rights are respected during transfers and placements, and that proximity to family and support networks is prioritized. Recognizing the growing impact of Alzheimer's disease and dementia, Public Act 25-16 also creates a statewide task force to develop and update a comprehensive Alzheimer's Plan and requires insurance coverage for biomarker testing to support early diagnosis and treatment. These initiatives will improve care coordination and strengthen Connecticut's ability to respond to the needs of residents living with cognitive impairments.

In addition, lawmakers expanded opportunities for empowerment and engagement. Residents of nursing homes who have lived in a facility for at least 30 days will now be eligible for tuition waivers at Connecticut's community colleges under Public Act 25-16, offering pathways for personal growth and connection to the broader community.

Finally, measures like Public Act 25-15 ensure that veterans are given priority admission to federally contracted veterans' homes, while Public Act 25-48 launches a study of conservatorship practices to identify improvements for individuals requiring representation in care settings.

Together, these legislative gains mark meaningful progress in advancing the rights, safety, and well-being of individuals receiving long-term care in Connecticut. They also reinforce the critical role of the Ombudsman Program in ensuring residents and families are informed and empowered to exercise their rights as these new protections take effect.



Looking Forward for the 2026 Connecticut Legislative Session

The 2026 Connecticut Legislative Session is scheduled to convene on February 4, 2026, and adjourn on May 6, 2026, as an even-numbered year short session of the Connecticut General Assembly. Entering the 2026 session, Connecticut has a Democratic trifecta, with Democrats holding the governorship and majorities in both the House and Senate, including a two-thirds supermajority in the House and a strong majority in the Senate.

During the session, the General Assembly is likely to consider legislation addressing healthcare oversight, long-term services and supports, workforce stability, and accountability across regulated care settings, while operating within the state's constitutional spending cap. Committees of jurisdiction, including Aging, Public Health, and Human Services, are expected to play a central role in advancing policies that support aging in place, strengthen oversight of nursing homes and other long-term care providers, and improve access to home- and community-based services for older adults and people with disabilities.

Legislative Session 2026 Agenda Summary for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

The Connecticut Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program's (LTCOP) 2026 legislative agenda will focus on strengthening resident rights, improving accountability across long-term care settings, and modernizing statutory protections to reflect resident experience and evolving models of care. Core priorities will include enhancing protections related to transfers and discharges, expanding and enforcing resident rights concerning technology, visitation, and freedom from retaliation, and strengthening



oversight of nursing home ownership, management, and staffing practices.

The agenda will also emphasize promoting resident dignity and quality of life through updates to financial protections, advancing quality measurement initiatives that center resident and family experience, and reinforcing transparency in facility operations and reporting. Additional priorities will address resident safety during facility closures, evacuations, and transitions of care, as well as alignment of state law with federal resident rights standards.

Through these legislative efforts, the LTCOP will continue to advocate for policies that uphold dignity, safety, choice, and self-determination for individuals receiving long-term services and supports, while elevating resident voices and supporting their participation in shaping laws that directly affect their lives.

LTCOP Bill Tracker

During each legislative session, The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program continues to track and highlight a selection of priority focus bills as they relate to individuals who receive their Long Term Services and Supports in settings such as Skilled Nursing Facilities, Assisted Living Facilities and Residential Care Homes. The Bill Tracker is Updated Weekly and can be Accessed: <https://portal.ct.gov/ltcop/legislative-bill-tracker> .



Connecticut Resident Council Presidents Executive Board – Combined Campaign: “Got COLA? Get PNA Raised!”

Dear Long-Term Care Residents of Connecticut Nursing Homes,

As the Executive Board of Presidents of Resident Councils across Connecticut, we remain united in our mission to protect and improve the well-being, dignity, and quality of life for all nursing home residents in our state.

The 2025 legislative session has officially ended, and while progress was made on many important fronts, we know that one critical issue still demands urgent attention: ensuring fair and ongoing increases to the Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) through Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA).

Over the past few years, the cost of everyday essentials, like hygiene products, snacks, seasonal clothing, and small comforts, has continued to rise, while the amount residents receive each month has stayed the same. Many residents are finding it harder to afford basic personal items that contribute to a dignified and independent life.

This year, we are combining our voices for a powerful campaign:

“Got COLA? Get PNA Raised!”



What Are We Fighting For?

The Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) is a vital resource for Medicaid recipients in nursing homes, enabling us to cover personal expenses not included in Medicaid coverage, such as clothing, toiletries, and other essentials. Right now, the PNA is \$75 per month in Connecticut, a figure we fought hard to increase in 2021.

But with the rising cost of living, we know that \$75 doesn't stretch as far as it used to. Prices go up every year, shouldn't our allowance keep up, too? That's why we're demanding that PNA increases be tied to Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). Your needs don't stay flat, your allowance shouldn't either!





Call to Action – We Need Your Help!

We are collecting testimonials from residents across Connecticut nursing homes to show lawmakers the real impact of the current PNA and the benefits of tying it to COLA in order to hopefully pass a bill next session like **HB 6775** which would automatically increase our personal needs allowance every time there is a cost of living adjustment to our income. To strengthen our advocacy efforts, and to get this bill passed, **we need your help!** Lawmakers need to hear directly from residents about the importance of increasing the PNA.

How You Can Participate:

1. Share Your Experience:

- How does the current \$75 PNA affect your ability to purchase personal items and services?
- What challenges do you face with the current amount?
- How would an increase tied to COLA improve your daily life and well-being?

2. Submit Your Story:



- **Online:** Fill out our quick and easy form at <https://ads-sua-hipaaforms.ct.gov/253345810550957> or Scan this QR Code



○

- **By Email:** Complete the attached paper form and email it to us at LTCOP@ct.gov .

The 2025 legislative session ran from January 8th to June 4th. While we made our voices heard, our work isn't done. Now is the time to prepare for the next session and show lawmakers that residents across Connecticut are united: the Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) must keep pace with the rising cost of living, because our dignity matters.

We're building our campaign now to be ready on day one. Your input, stories, and support are essential to driving this change. If you'd prefer to share feedback in person or need help completing the online form, please reach out to your Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman or contact us at LTCOP@ct.gov.

Together, we can secure a PNA that truly reflects the cost of living and supports the dignity and quality of life all residents deserve. Thank you for being part of this effort.



In Solidarity,

The Executive Board of Presidents of Resident Councils Connecticut Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP)

*Susan Bilansky John Balisciano Jeanette Martinez Richard Hodges
Martha Leland Robert Willis
Cindy Michaud*

Jeanette Sullivan-Martinez; President
John Balisciano Jr; Vice President
Ivette Alvarez
Robert Willis

Richard Hodges
Martha Leland
Susan Bilansky
Richard Metayer
Cindy Michaud

Got COLA? Get Heard on PNA! – Resident Feedback Form

Consent and Privacy Notice:

By submitting this form, you authorize the Executive Board of Presidents of Resident Councils and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman to use your responses in our advocacy efforts to increase the Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) in Connecticut. We value your privacy and understand that you may wish to support this cause without fully disclosing your personal information.

Your Options:

- ***Full Disclosure:*** Providing your full name, facility, and town allows us to demonstrate the widespread impact across the state.
- ***Partial Disclosure:*** If you prefer, you may share only your first name and town, or any combination of details you are comfortable with.



- **Anonymity:** You may choose to remain anonymous; however, please note that anonymous testimonials may have less impact in our advocacy efforts.

Rest assured, any information you provide will be used solely for the purpose of advocating for residents' rights and will be handled with the utmost care to protect your privacy.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at LTCOP@ct.gov. Thank you for your support and participation.

Online Form Questions:

Resident Name:
Nursing Facility Name:
Town:
1. Personal Impact: How does the current PNA affect your ability to buy personal items and services?
2. Challenges Faced: Have you had trouble meeting your personal needs because of the current PNA amount?



3. **Benefits of an Increase:** How would an increase in the PNA improve your daily life and well-being?

4. **Specific Needs:** Are there specific items or services you currently can't afford that you would prioritize if the PNA were increased?

5. **Additional Comments:** Please share any other thoughts or suggestions about the PNA and how it affects your quality of life.



Celebrating Jeanette Sulliva-Martinez

2025 Recipient of the Consumer Voice Janet Tulloch Leadership Award



We are delighted to announce that Jeanette Sullivan-Martinez, President of the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Residents Councils for the Connecticut Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, has been honored with the 2025 Consumer Voice Leadership Award. This national award recognizes an extraordinary resident advocate, family caregiver, or long-term care consumer who works directly to improve the lives of individuals receiving long-term services and supports.

Jeanette has been a steadfast and influential advocate for residents for more than a decade. She has served as President of the Residents' Council at Pendleton Health & Rehabilitation Center since 2010 and has represented nursing home residents at statewide meetings and legislative hearings. Her leadership extends nationally through her roles with the Moving Forward coalition and the Resident Executive Committee for Consumer Voice.

Her voice has reached far beyond her home community, appearing in state and federal hearings, national media outlets, and local newspapers. Whether speaking about residents' rights, quality of care, or systemic reform, Jeanette brings clarity,



courage, and deep compassion to every conversation.

Jeanette has been a resident of Pendleton since 2008, and she proudly shares that she is a mother of three and a grandmother. Her lived experience, advocacy, and commitment continue to make a powerful impact on residents in Connecticut and across the country.

Please join us in congratulating Jeanette on this well-deserved national recognition, and in thanking her for her tireless dedication to uplifting the voices of individuals receiving long-term care.

To read more about the 2025 Consumer Voice Leadership Award recipients, visit:

<https://theconsumervoice.org/news/congratulations-to-the-2025-consumer-voice-leadership-award-winners/>



It's Your Choice — Let's Hear Your VOICE!

Join the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils (SCPRC)

- ✓ Are you a nursing home resident interested in making a difference?
- ✓ The SCPRC is a resident-led group of nursing home leaders from across Connecticut who work together to strengthen resident councils and advocate for the rights and quality of life of over 30,000 residents statewide.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS!

WHAT TO EXPECT:



Just 2 hours per month to attend meetings and share your input

AS A MEMBER YOU WILL:



Be a Voice for nursing home residents



Represent your peers



Advocate for resident rights and interests

TO LEARN MORE



Talk to your Regional Ombudsman or call 1-866-388-1888



Larson, Blumenthal, Tenney, and Cornyn Reintroduce the *Essential Caregivers Act*

Here in Connecticut, we have been blessed to advance protections that recognize what residents and families have always known. Loved ones are not just visitors. They are essential caregivers, advocates, and a lifeline to dignity, safety, and emotional well being.

The isolation experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic caused real and lasting harm to residents across the country. This legislation helps ensure that never happens again by guaranteeing at least one designated essential caregiver access during emergencies, with appropriate health and safety safeguards.

It is critically important that residents nationwide receive the same fundamental protections that Connecticut has worked hard to uphold. Resident rights should not depend on geography. This bill moves us closer to a consistent national standard that honors humanity, connection, and person centered care in long term care settings.



Thank You for Making the 29th Annual VOICES Forum a Success!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the incredible residents, staff, and advocates who joined us for the **29th Annual VOICES Forum**. Your presence, energy, and thoughtful contributions helped make the day one of meaningful conversation, shared wisdom, and collective empowerment. Together, we advanced the work of Resident Councils across the state and lifted up the voices that matter most.

For those who were unable to attend in person, we understand that travel and scheduling can sometimes be a challenge. The good news is—you can still be part of the experience!

We've made the **recorded sessions and presentation materials** from the day available online.

Visit: portal.ct.gov/ltcop/voices2025 to watch the recording and access the PowerPoints and handouts from the event.

Thank you again for your continued commitment to resident rights and advocacy.

We're excited to announce that the **30th Annual VOICES Forum** will be held on **Friday, October 9th, 2026**. Visit the [VOICES 2026 webpage](#) for more information and the link to RSVP beginning **August 1, 2026**.

- **Date:** Friday, October 2th, 2026
- **Time:** 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
- **Location:** Aqua Turf, 556 Mulberry St, Plantsville, CT 06479



CALL TO ACTION | Resident Council Presidents and Therapeutic Recreation Directors



The Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils is excited to continue our ongoing initiative to highlight the outstanding work being done in nursing homes across our state. We know that many of you are implementing innovative and effective practices that greatly enhance the quality of life for residents. Now is your chance to share these successes with your peers!

We are calling for submissions of best practices from Resident Council Presidents and Therapeutic Recreation Directors for our upcoming edition of *The Silver Panther*. Whether it's a unique program, an effective policy, or a creative solution to a common challenge, we want



to hear about it! Your submissions will help inspire and guide other facilities in adopting practices that have been proven to work.

How to Participate:

1. **Identify** best practices that have had a positive impact on residents.
2. **Write** a brief description (300-500 words) detailing the practice or program, the results, and any resources or suggestions to help others implement if interested.
3. **Include** any photos, videos, or testimonials from residents and staff.
4. **Submit** your entry via email to LTCOP@ct.gov and Daniel.Beem@ct.gov as soon as possible.

Benefits of Participation:

- **Recognition:** Your facility will be highlighted in our statewide newsletter, *The Silver Panther*, and on our website.
- **Sharing Knowledge:** Contribute to a repository of best practices that others can learn from and implement.
- **Inspiration:** Motivate other facilities to innovate and improve their own resident care practices.

We believe that by sharing our successes, we help to elevate the standard of care and quality of life in all nursing homes. We look forward to receiving your submissions and showcasing the incredible work being done across our state.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to enhancing the lives of our residents.



The Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is now on Facebook!



Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

2K followers • 106 following

www.Facebook.com/ctlitcop

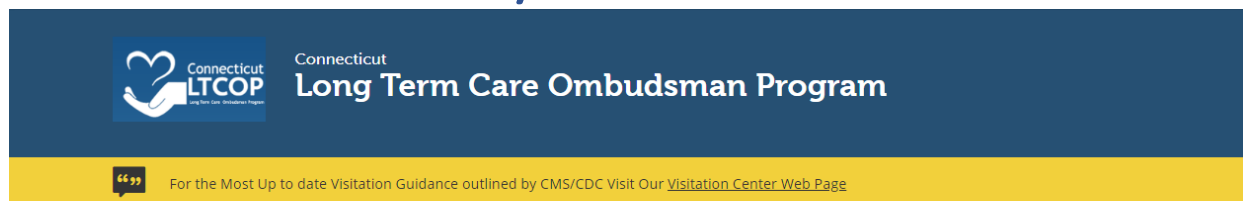


Please visit our page and **“Like and Follow”**

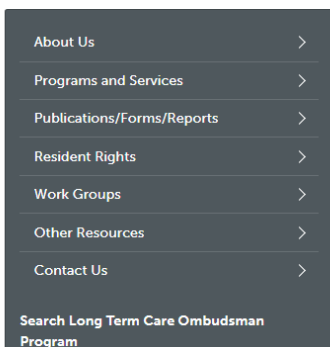




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Please visit the CTLTCOP web page and click **“Subscribe”** to stay informed on topics that you care about most:

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 - Visitation / COVID-19 Updates
- Educational Opportunities / Webinars



Connecticut LTCOP

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Community Ombudsman Program



PURPOSE

Enhance quality of life and care for Connecticut citizens who receive long term services and supports



SETTINGS

- Residential Care Homes
- Assisted Living Communities
- Private Homes



WHAT DOES THE LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY OMBUDSMAN DO?

- **RECEIVES** and looks into complaints and assists individuals to resolve problems.
- **EDUCATES** individuals and families about their rights.
- **EMPOWERS** and supports individuals and families to discuss concerns with others providing care or services.
- **PROVIDES** information regarding long-term services and supports
- **ADVOCATES** improvements in state and federal laws and regulations.
- **REPRESENTS** the voice of individuals receiving LTSS and their interests before governmental agencies.
- **IDENTIFIES** and seeks to remedy gaps in provider, government, or community services.
- **RESPECTS** the privacy and confidentiality of individuals.

CONFIDENTIAL AND RESIDENT DIRECTED

All activities are on behalf of residents and at their direction. All communication is held in strict confidentiality. The Ombudsman does not follow up unless directed to by the individual.



SEEKING HELP

You're entitled to seek help to exercise your rights.

Visit Us On the Web at:
<https://portal.ct.gov/ltcop/ltxco>
or Call

1-866-388-1888



Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils

(SCPRC) Steering Committee Members

Sullivan-Martinez, Jeanette <i>President</i>	Pendleton Healthcare
Balisciano Jr., John <i>Vice President</i>	Hewitt Health and Rehab
Bilansky, Susan	Hebrew Home
Leland, Martha	Touchpoints of Manchester
Richard Metayer	Pendleton Healthcare
Robert Willis	West Side
Ivette Alvarez	Newtown
Cindy Michaud	Summit of Plantsville
Mariyln Cadoff	McClean
Carol Runlett	Branford Hills (ARK)



**MOVING
FORWARD**
NURSING HOME QUALITY COALITION

STRENGTHENING RESIDENT COUNCILS

Did You Want to Participate in the Moving Forward Resident Council (RC) Pilot in CT but Weren't Selected?

Don't Worry! We're committed to ensuring that every facility in Connecticut has the opportunity to explore and benefit from the Moving Forward Strengthening Resident Council Guide. Even if your facility was not chosen as part of the formal pilot, you can still join our non-pilot group and receive additional support to enhance your resident council's impact

HOW TO GET STARTED

Simply sign up using the link below, and we will reach out with details on how your facility can begin using the guide and take part in this exciting initiative!

[SIGN UP](#)





Moving Forward Strengthening Resident Council Guide Connecticut Pilot

About the Initiative: The Moving Forward Coalition’s “Strengthening Resident Councils” project is a national effort focused on enhancing the effectiveness and impact of resident councils in nursing facilities. Connecticut was selected as a pilot state and is set to launch the initiative in January 2025 with 25 nursing facilities to test the effectiveness of the [Strengthening Resident Councils Guide](#) and gather feedback for improving resident engagement. This guide supports resident-directed councils, fostering meaningful collaboration and improved quality of life for nursing home residents statewide. [Access the Guide Here](#)

Did Your Facility Council Want to Participate in the Moving Forward Resident Council (RC) Pilot in CT but Weren’t Selected?

Don’t Worry! We’re committed to ensuring that every facility in Connecticut has the opportunity to explore and benefit from the Moving Forward Strengthening Resident Council Guide. Even if your facility was not chosen as part of the formal pilot you can [Click Here to Sign up](#) or Scan the QR Code Here.





Games and Puzzles







TOLL FREE NUMBER

[1-866-388-1888](tel:1-866-388-1888)

Email: ltcop@ct.gov

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CTLTCOP

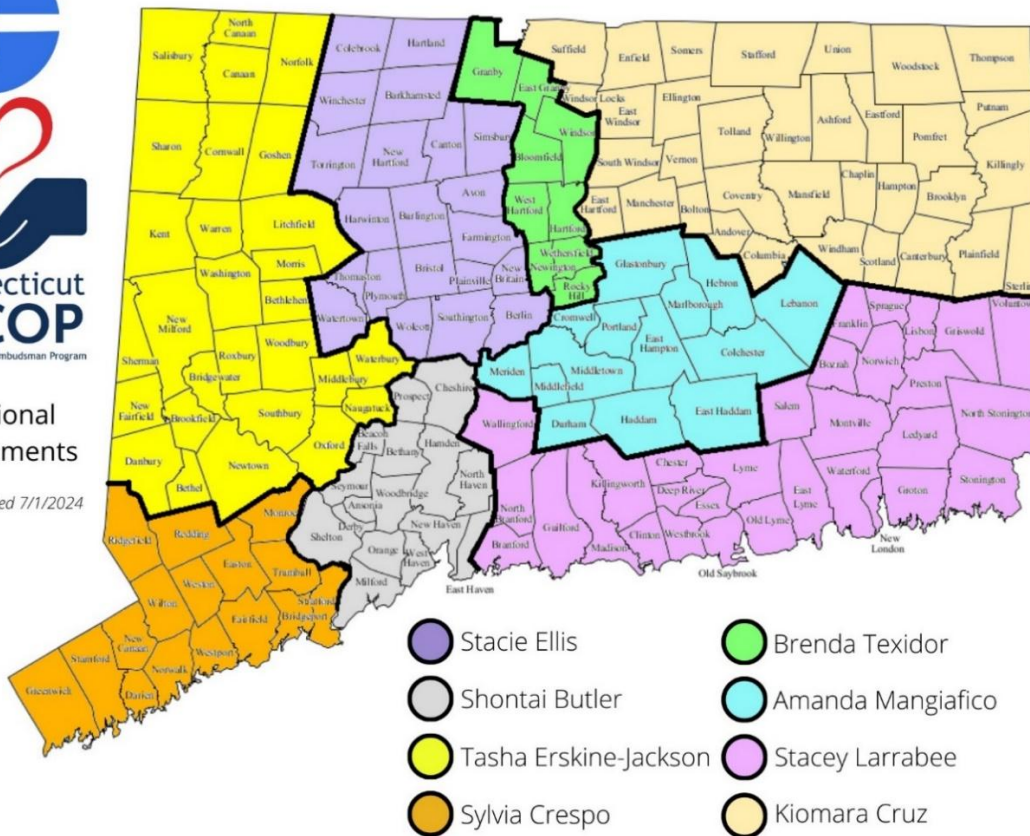
State Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/ltcop>

Contact The CT Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Toll Free [1-866-388-1888](tel:1-866-388-1888)



Regional Assignments

Last Updated 7/1/2024





The Center for Medicare Advocacy

The Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization which provides education, advocacy, and legal assistance to help elders and people with disabilities obtain necessary healthcare. We focus on the needs of Medicare beneficiaries, people with chronic conditions, and those in need of long-term care. The organization is involved in education, training and litigation activities of importance to Medicare beneficiaries nationwide.

TOLL FREE NUMBER

Telephone: [860-456-7790](tel:860-456-7790) | **Toll Free:** [1-800-262-4414](tel:1-800-262-4414)

Email: info@medicareadvocacy.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MedicareAdvocacy.org>

Website: <https://medicareadvocacy.org/>