

Silver Panther Newsletter

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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 Legislative Session Overview

The 2025 Connecticut Legislative Session has officially commenced! It started on January 8, 2025, and will adjourn on June 4, 2025. In the recent elections, the Democratic Party has maintained and strengthened its control over both chambers of the Connecticut General Assembly. The Democrats have increased their majority to 102 seats in the house of representatives, achieving a two-thirds supermajority in the 151-seat chamber. The Democratic Party also holds a majority with 25 seats in the 36-seat Senate.

Legislative Session 2025 Agenda Summary for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Office

The 2025 Connecticut Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) legislative agenda focuses on advancing resident rights, ensuring fair treatment, and improving care standards in long-term care settings. Key



priorities include enhancing protections against discrimination, strengthening safeguards for residents facing involuntary discharges, and improving emergency preparedness during facility closures or evacuations.

The agenda also emphasizes regular increases to the Personal Needs Allowance to align with increases in the cost of living changes, increasing penalties for neglectful practices, and clarifying reporting requirements to address abuse and neglect effectively.

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/lcop/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 are united in our mission to enhance the well-being and quality of life for all nursing home residents in our state. With the 2025 Connecticut General Assembly now in session from January 8th to June 4th, we have a pivotal opportunity to push for legislative changes that directly impact our daily lives.

This year, we are combining our voices for a powerful campaign:
“Got COLA? Get PNA Raised!”



Nursing Home Residents Need a Real Cost-of-Living Increase.
It's time to "pop the cap" on fair and consistent COLA increases—because
dignity shouldn't go flat!



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 **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://forms.ct.gov/LTCOPSupport/got-cola> 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 runs from January 8th to June 4th. Let's show lawmakers that residents across Connecticut are united: **PNA should keep pace with the cost of living—because our dignity matters.** Thank you for your participation and support. Together, we can make this happen!

In Solidarity,

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

If you prefer to discuss your feedback in person or require assistance in completing the online form, do not hesitate to reach out to your



Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman or contact us directly at LTCOP@ct.gov.

Your participation is crucial in our collective effort to advocate for a PNA that reflects the true cost of living, thereby supporting the dignity and quality of life of all nursing home residents in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and commitment to this important cause.

Sincerely,

The Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils,

Susan Bilansky John Balisciano Jr. Jeanette Martinez
Martha Leland Robert Willis Ivette Alvarez

Jeanette Sullivan-Martinez;
President

John Balisciano Jr; Vice President
Ivette Alvarez
Robert Willis

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.



Long-Term Care Residents Honored During Residents' Rights Month, October 2025



This October, in honor of *Residents' Rights Month* and the *50th Anniversary of the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care*, residents across Connecticut's long-term care facilities are invited to share their voices and experiences.

This year's theme, **"Stand With Me,"** highlights the strength in solidarity and the importance of listening to residents who speak up for their rights and advocate for quality care.



We encourage all residents to contribute creative submissions that reflect what it means to stand up, be heard, and live with dignity in long-term care. Submissions can include:

- Short written reflections or poems (50 words or less)
- Posters, paintings, or drawings
- Video entries sharing your story or message

Submissions may be selected by Consumer Voice for a national coffee table book celebrating resident voices. All entries from Connecticut will also be highlighted during our **LTCOP Voices Forum**, regardless of whether they are chosen for the national book.

Submit your entry by June 30, 2025

Submit to Consumer Voice (national level):

- Email: info@theconsumervoice.org
- Mail: Consumer Voice, 1025 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 1000, Washington, DC 20036
- For video: email the MP4 file or share a YouTube link

Submit to Connecticut LTCOP September 15th, 2025 (state level):

- Email: LTCOP@ct.gov
- Speak with your Regional Ombudsman
- Call 1-866-388-1888 for help submitting

Use these questions to guide your entry:

- What makes you feel empowered?



- Why is it important to stand up for your rights or for quality care?
- What contributes to your quality of life?
- What is needed for quality care in a long-term care facility?
- How can family, staff, and the community support residents' voices?

Your voice matters. Whether through art, writing, or video, we invite you to speak up, stand strong, and share your story.

Examples of Previous Resident Right Submissions



Good care is when staff...
smile,
talk softly,
stick up for our rights,
explain things,
are respectful when I have an accident,
dig deep for patience,
come right away,
make me feel that someone cares about me.

By Nursing Home Residents in Pennsylvania



Best Practices

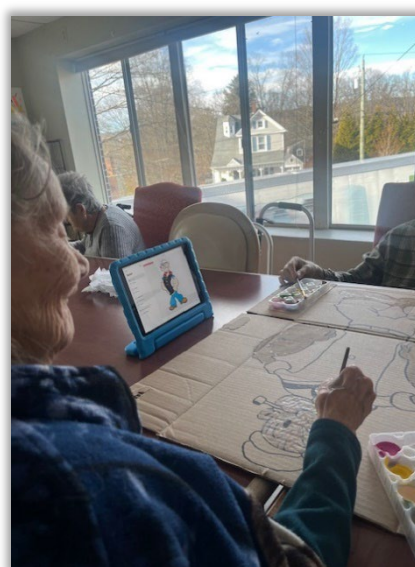
The Power of Participation: How Summit at Plantsville Residents Shape Their Own Fun

It is the philosophy of the recreation department to provide residents with activities that bring them joy. We strive for activities that are meaningful, purposeful, and fun. Our goal is to fill our residents' hearts not just their hours. We are committed to meet cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial needs of our residents. Although the recreation department plans and develops some recreation programs, it is very important that residents that are an integral part of the planning process for special events.

On the first Monday of the month, we have an activity committee meeting. All residents are encouraged to attend. The meeting begins with reviewing the current monthly calendar. Residents are then asked what type of programs they would like to occur in the following month-in addition to the "usual" recreation activities. When possible, suggestions are put on the calendar the next month-other groups are put on future calendars. All suggestions are a vital part of our monthly calendar. Discussions often occur in the activity committee that increase self-efficacy. This is because residents are encouraged to discuss personal interests and hobbies that were enjoyed prior to moving to Summit at Plantsville Center for Health and Rehabilitation. When such groups occur residents have the pleasure of knowing that said group was their suggestion. Countless special events have come out of our activity committee as brainstorming creates great ideas.



In addition to the activity committee meeting, residents are also part of the process of many special activities. Groups include making decorations, preparing food, or any project that is needed to make the group a success. Being involved in planning and preparing for a special event offers ownership, purposeful involvement, and excitement for upcoming events.





Employee Recognition Initiative at Douglas Manor

At Douglas Manor, we believe in fostering a positive environment where staff feel valued for their hard work. To achieve this, we



developed a Resident-Led Employee of the Month Program, allowing residents to recognize outstanding employees. Initially focused on CNAs, the idea evolved into a broader initiative honoring all staff members who contribute to daily life at our facility.

Each month, residents and caregivers submit votes for an employee who goes above and beyond. A locked ballot box ensures fairness, and Doug personally delivers ballots to residents who need assistance. The winning employee receives a \$25 gift card, front-row parking, and recognition on our Facebook page and at the Resident Council meeting.



Image above from left to right Claire Chesmer TRD and Doug Bertone

The program has been well received, with over 30 residents participating in the first round. It has strengthened connections between staff and residents while boosting morale across the facility. Doug shares, *“It keeps me busy, so I don’t have time to worry about other things.”*

For other facilities looking to implement a similar program, it is recommend to making ballots accessible, ensuring transparency, and offering meaningful incentives. Public recognition, such as



announcements and social media posts, further enhances engagement. This initiative has created a stronger sense of community at Douglas Manor, and we encourage others to adopt similar programs to celebrate their staff.



Save the Date for VOICES 2025

Save the Date: 2025 Annual Event

Mark your calendars! Join us for another impactful day dedicated to strengthening resident councils and improving quality care in Connecticut's long-term care community.

- **Date:** Friday, October 3rd, 2025
- **Time:** 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
- **Location:** Aqua Turf, 556 Mulberry St, Plantsville, CT 06479

Registration:

Registration will open in August 2025 and be available at <https://portal.ct.gov/lcop/voices2025> ; Stay tuned for further updates!



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** a best practice that has had a positive impact on your 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!



www.Facebook.com/ctlitcop

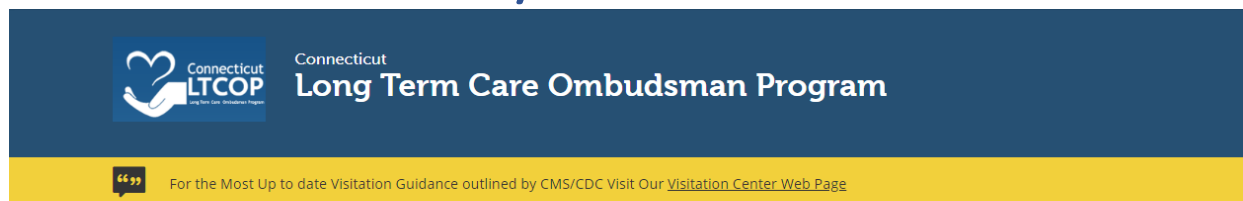


Please visit our page and **“Like and Follow”**

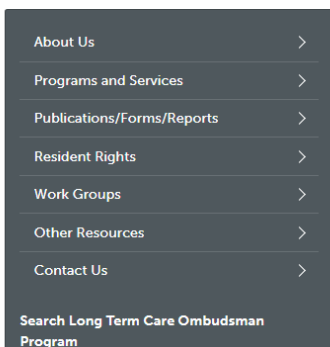




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CT.gov Home / Long Term Care Ombudsman Program



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

Legislative News

- Local and State Wide Resident Council Resources
 - Silver Panther Newsletter
- Local and State Wide Family Council Resources
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- 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](#)



A GUIDE TO
STRENGTHENING RESIDENT
COUNCILS IN NURSING HOMES
JANUARY 2024



**MOVING
FORWARD**
NURSING HOME QUALITY COALITION



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



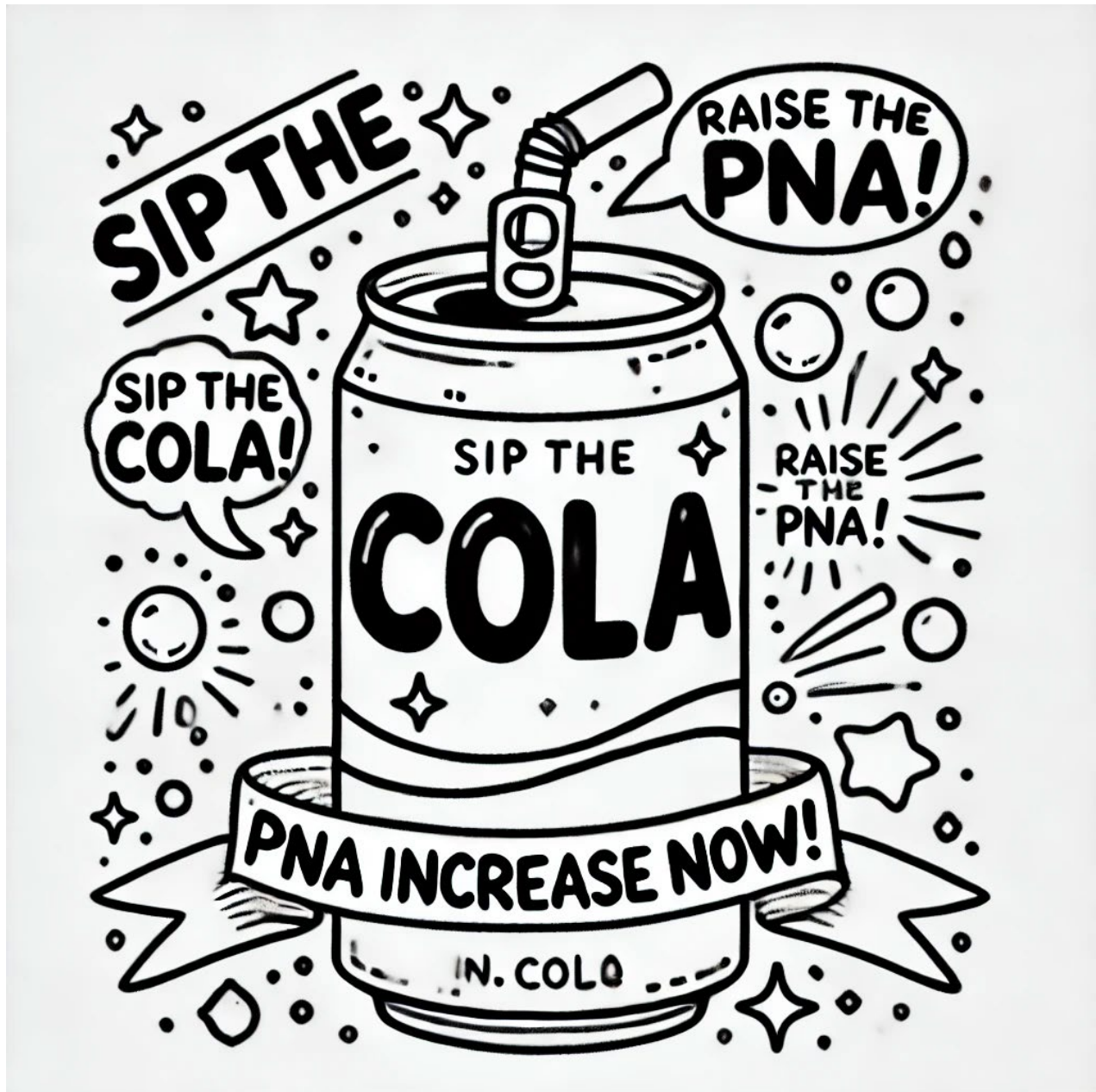
Use Your Voice Word Search

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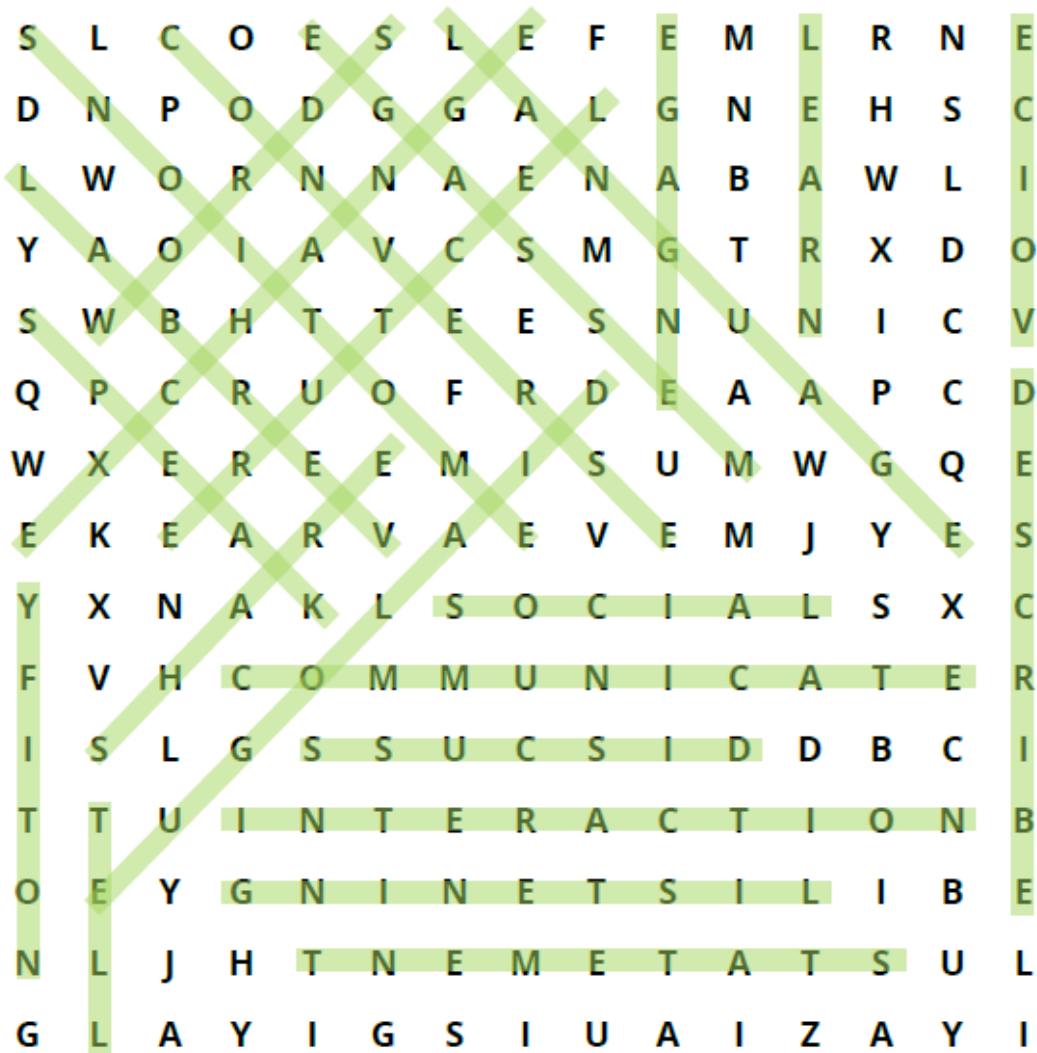
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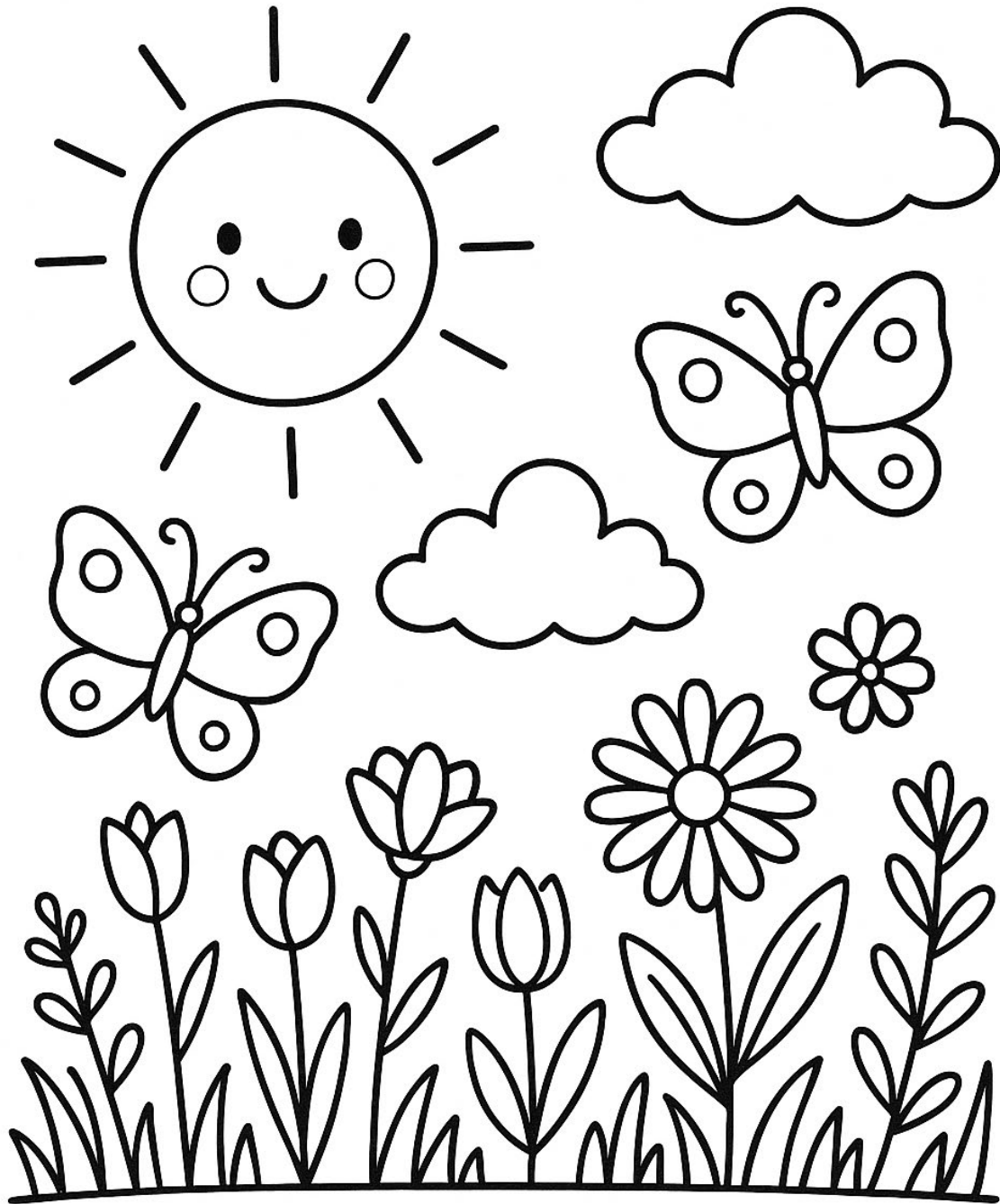
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Speak
Statement
Tell
Verbal
Voice
Words





Word Search





SPRING



TOLL FREE NUMBER

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

Email: ltcop@ct.gov

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CTLTCOP

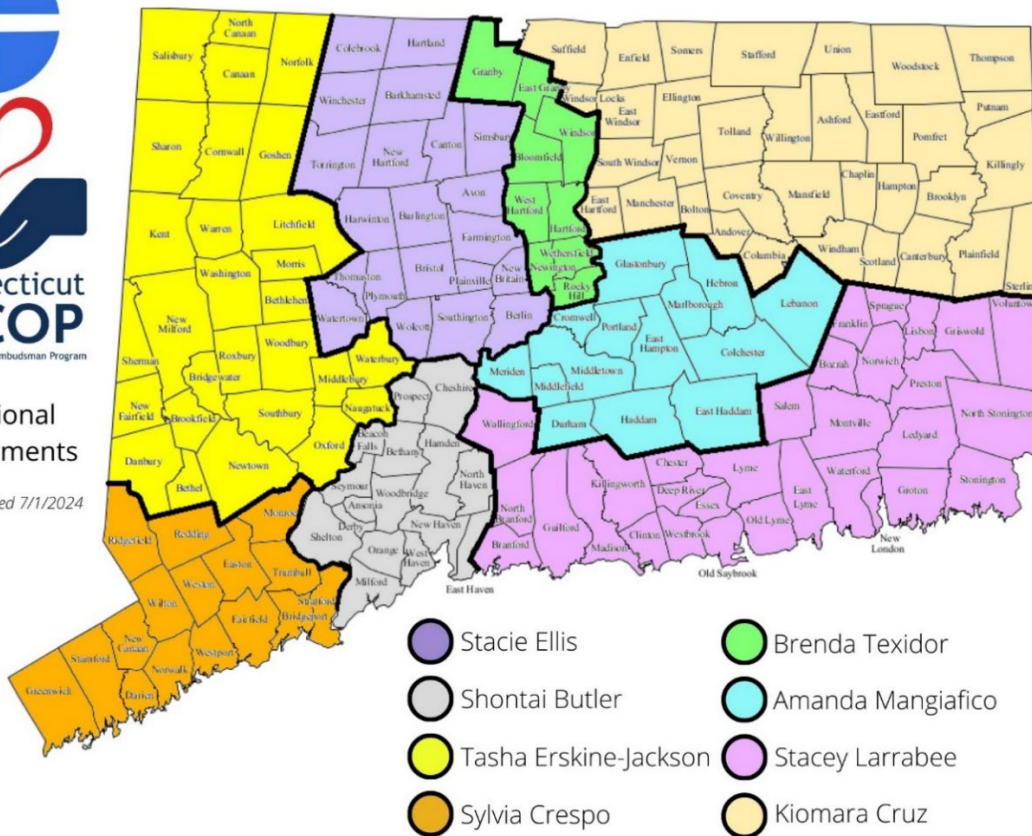
State Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/ltcop>

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/>