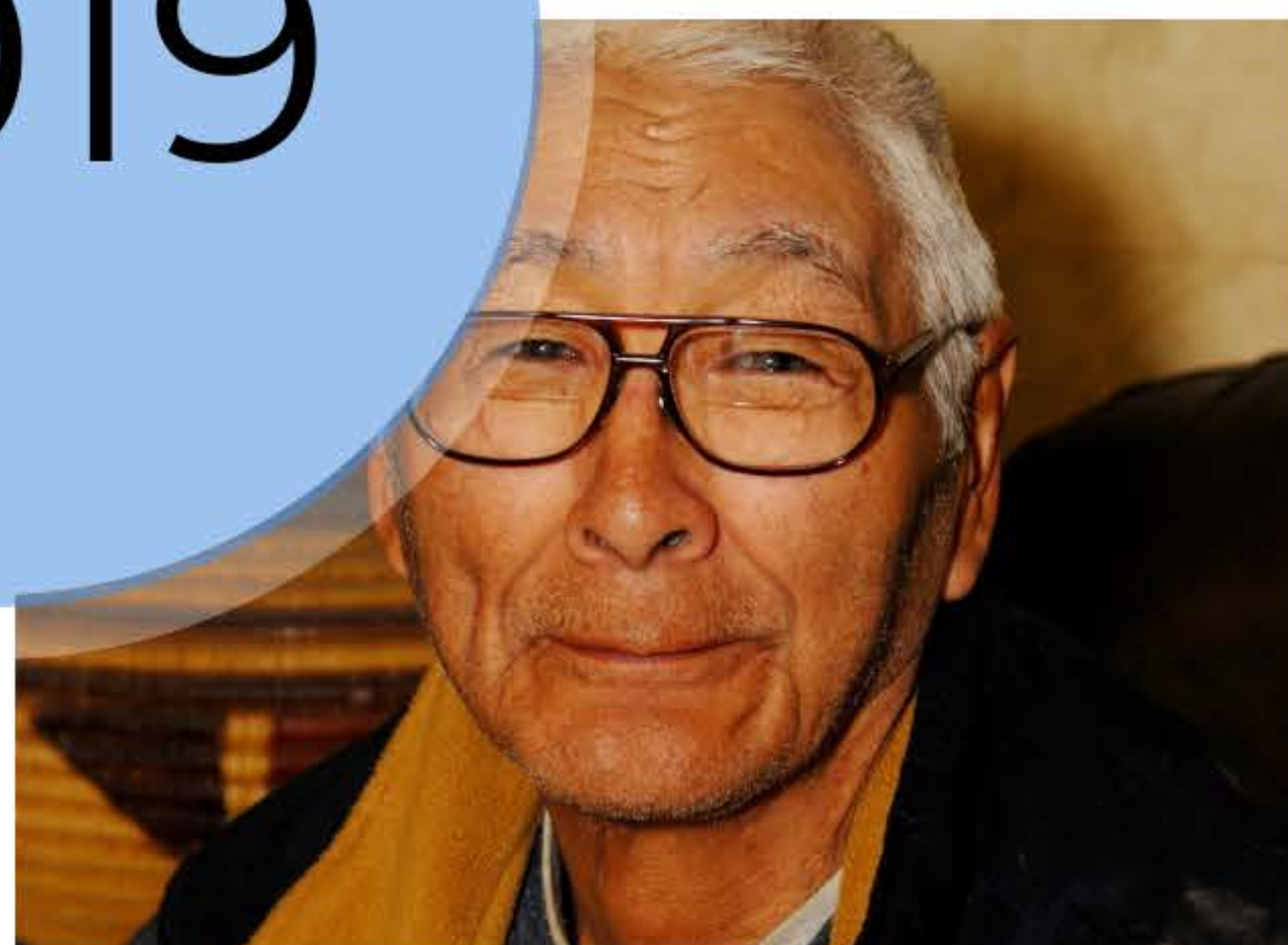




ALASKA  
LONG TERM CARE  
OMBUDSMAN

# Annual Report

**October 1, 2018 through September 30,  
2019**



2019



# **The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office (OLTCO)**

## **Introduction**

The Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman visits seniors in assisted living and skill nursing facilities statewide so that seniors have regular and timely access to Ombudsman services. There are more than 300 long-term care facilities in the State of Alaska. In 2019, the OLTCO made 1049 unannounced visits to all long-term care facilities in Alaska, visiting more than 3300 seniors. The OLTCO employs six (6) full time staff and works with over 60 certified volunteers to achieve the mission of the Office.

## **Transition**

The Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman has had a transition in leadership in 2019. Teresa Holt, who served as the State Long Term Care Ombudsman for the past five (5) years has transitioned to her new position as the State of Alaska – AARP State Director. We appreciate Teresa’s expertise with Senior Care and wish her well in her new role. Stephanie Wheeler, Ph.D. assumed the role of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman in December 2019. As the new LTCO, Stephanie is looking forward to continuing the mission of the Office and advocating for elders living in assistant living homes and skilled nursing facilities.

## **A Snapshot of Accomplishments**

In 2019, the team completed 1049 visits to facilities, handled over 583 complaints, opened 367 cases from those complaints, and closed 388 cases (includes ongoing cases carried over from 2018). 97% of complaints were partially or fully resolved to the satisfaction of the resident in these facilities. The office also participated in systems work related to emergency preparedness for the assisted living homes. The Office (with the help of consultants) created a Culturally Appropriate Resident Council Toolkit to support the work of resident councils in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living homes.

## **Collaboration is Key to the Success of Our Work**

The Office acknowledges the coordination efforts with our community partners such as Senior and Disability Services, Residential Licensing, Health Facilities Licensing and Certification, Adult Protective Services, Office of Public Advocacy, Elder Fraud, care coordinators, Alaska Commission on Aging, Mountain-Pacific Quality Health, Alaska State Ombudsman Office, and of course the amazing volunteers who work diligently in their communities to ensure the rights, health, safety and welfare of elders living in assisted living or skilled nursing facilities.



# About us:

## The Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman (OLTCO)

### Ombudsman (om-budz- man)

- A Swedish word meaning "representative of the people."
- The OLTCO advocates for quality of care & quality of life of residents in long-term care facilities

### Core Values

- Resident directed
- Resolution focused
- Respect
- Advocacy
- Professionalism

### Mission Statement

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is mandated by the Older Americans Act and state law to provide resident-centered advocacy designed to protect the rights, health, safety, and welfare of Alaskans living in nursing facilities and assisted living homes.

In Alaska, the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program also provides advocacy to seniors living in the community who have issues with their residential circumstances.

### Contact Information

Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman  
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200  
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone: (907) 334-4480 or (800) 730-6393 Toll-free  
Fax: (907) 334-4486  
Email: [akoltco@alaska.org](mailto:akoltco@alaska.org)  
Web: [www.akoltco.org](http://www.akoltco.org)





## What We Do:



INFORMATION &  
REFERRALS



EDUCATE ABOUT RIGHTS



INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS &  
RESOLVE ISSUES & CONCERNS



EMPOWER WITH SELF-  
ADVOCACY



VISIT AGED 60 OR OLDER



ADVOCATE TO IMPROVE  
QUALITY OF LIFE

## When should you contact a Long Term Care Ombudsman?



- To report a problem or concern
- If an older Alaskan is being discharged from a facility against their wishes
- To get information about long term care
- To ask for help addressing a systemic issue
- To volunteer as an Ombudsman



# Staff



**Stephanie Wheeler**  
State LTC Ombudsman

Systems Issues  
Public Education  
Program Administration



**Kathryn Curry**  
Deputy LTC Ombudsman

Volunteer Management  
Partner Agency Coordinator  
Case Consultation  
Facility Coverage in:  
MatSu, Chugiak & Eagle River



**Karol Collyer**  
Assistant LTC Ombudsman

Facility Coverage in:  
Kenai Peninsula & Kodiak  
Part of Anchorage



**Leana Christy**  
Assistant LTC Ombudsman

Facility Coverage in:  
Southeast  
Part of Anchorage



**Alvin Ancheta**  
Assistant LTC Ombudsman

Facility Coverage in:  
North and West Interior  
Part of Anchorage



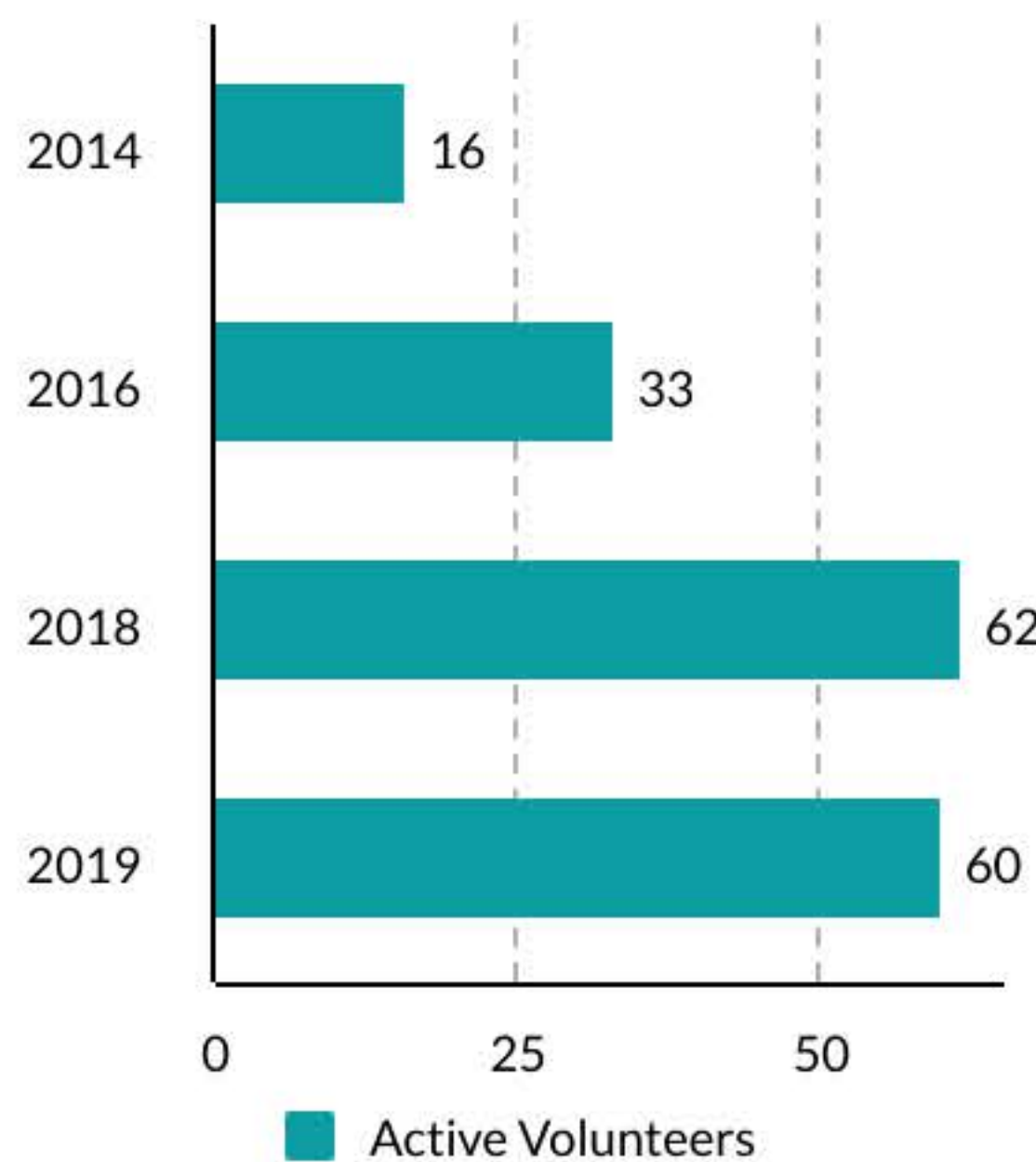
**Kerri Tanner**  
LTC Specialist

Intake Processing & Referrals  
Tech/Admin Support  
Volunteer Program Assistance

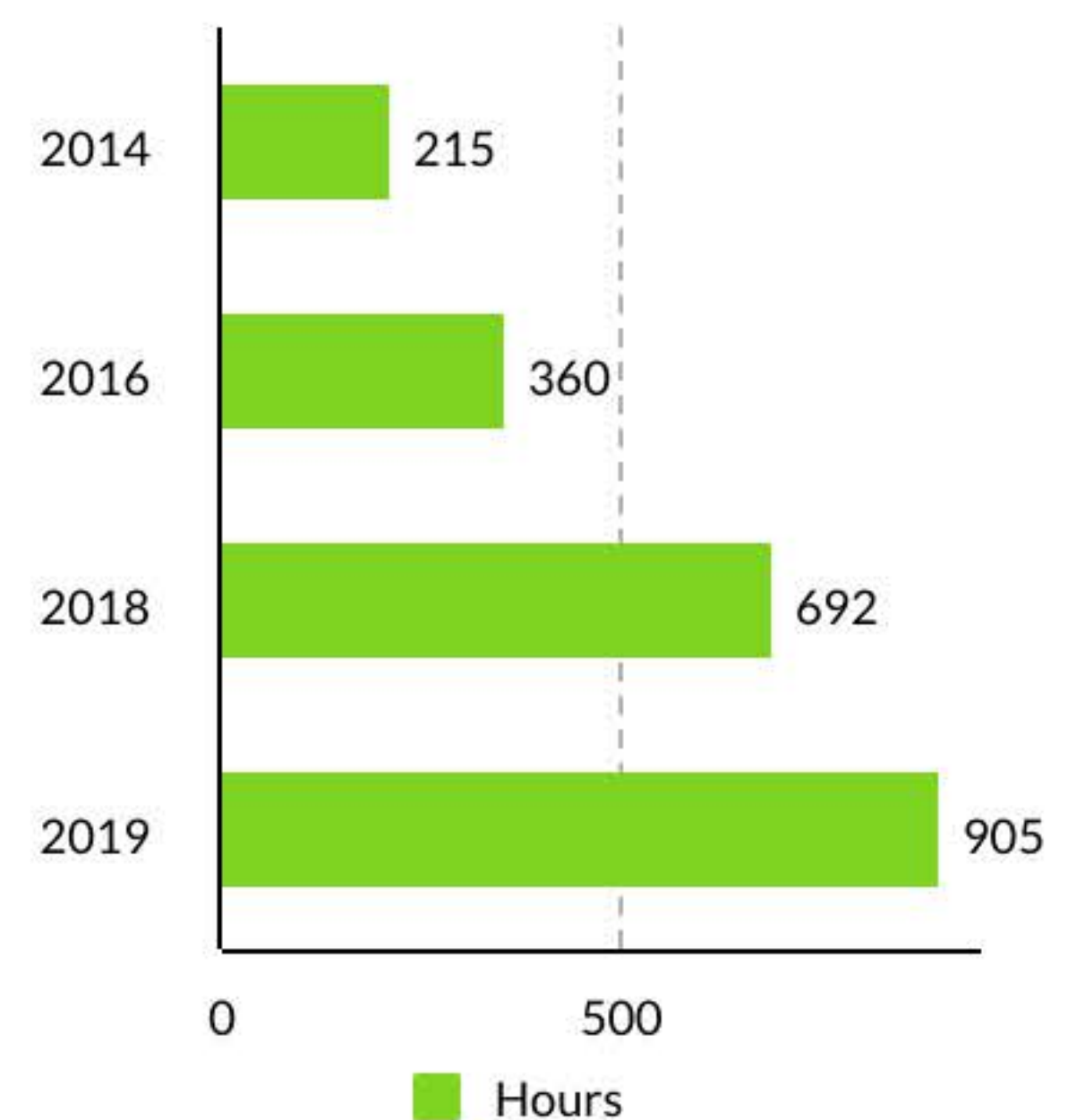




Active Volunteers



Volunteer Hours



## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A VOLUNTEER?



- A passion for Elders
- Friendly and Outgoing
- Creative problem solving
- Ability to be observant and non-judgmental
- A good listener who likes talking with older Alaskans

### How do I apply to be a volunteer?

Complete an application online at [www.akoltco.org](http://www.akoltco.org).

For more information contact one of our team members at 907-334-4480 or email [akoltco@alaska.gov](mailto:akoltco@alaska.gov)

## Volunteering involves:

1. Classroom training
2. On-site facility training with staff
3. A one year commitment
4. On-line training
5. Resolving Complaints
6. Communicating with OLTCO staff
7. Completing 1 visit to a facility per month followed by an on-line summary report of your visit
8. Attending a 1 hour monthly training meeting, in person or online (no meetings in June or December)

We couldn't do this work without our volunteers!





## Assisted Living Homes



**#1** Discharge & Eviction



**#2** Issues with guardian or legal representative



**#3** Ability to exercise rights & personal choice



**#4** Least restrictive setting



**#5** Food Service

# Top 5

## COMPLAINTS

583

complaints resolved

97%

resolved to the satisfaction of the resident

## Nursing Homes



**#1** Discharge & Eviction



**#2** Issues with guardian or legal representative



**#3** Failure to respond timely to requests for assistance



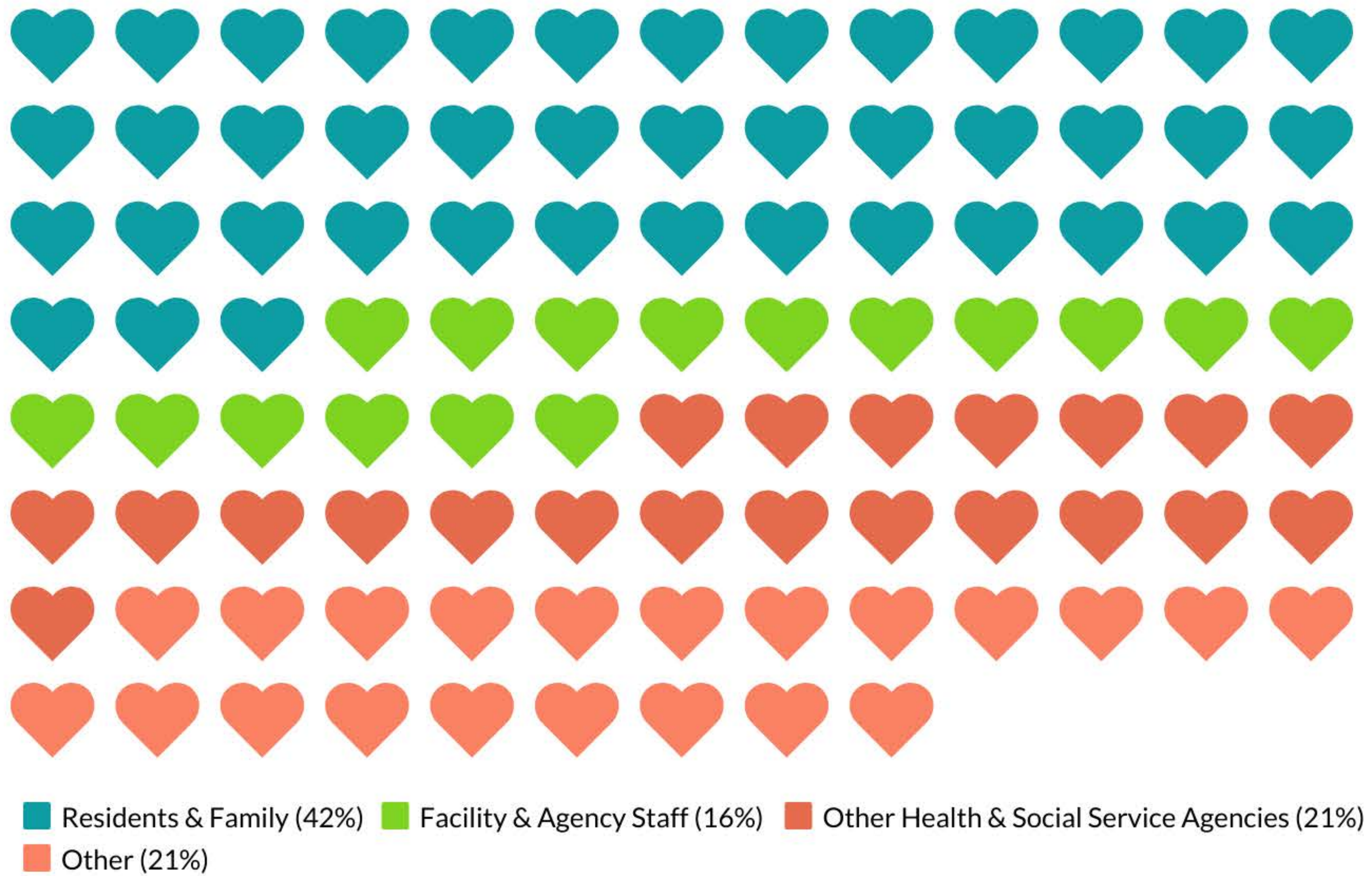
**#4** Less restrictive placement/housing



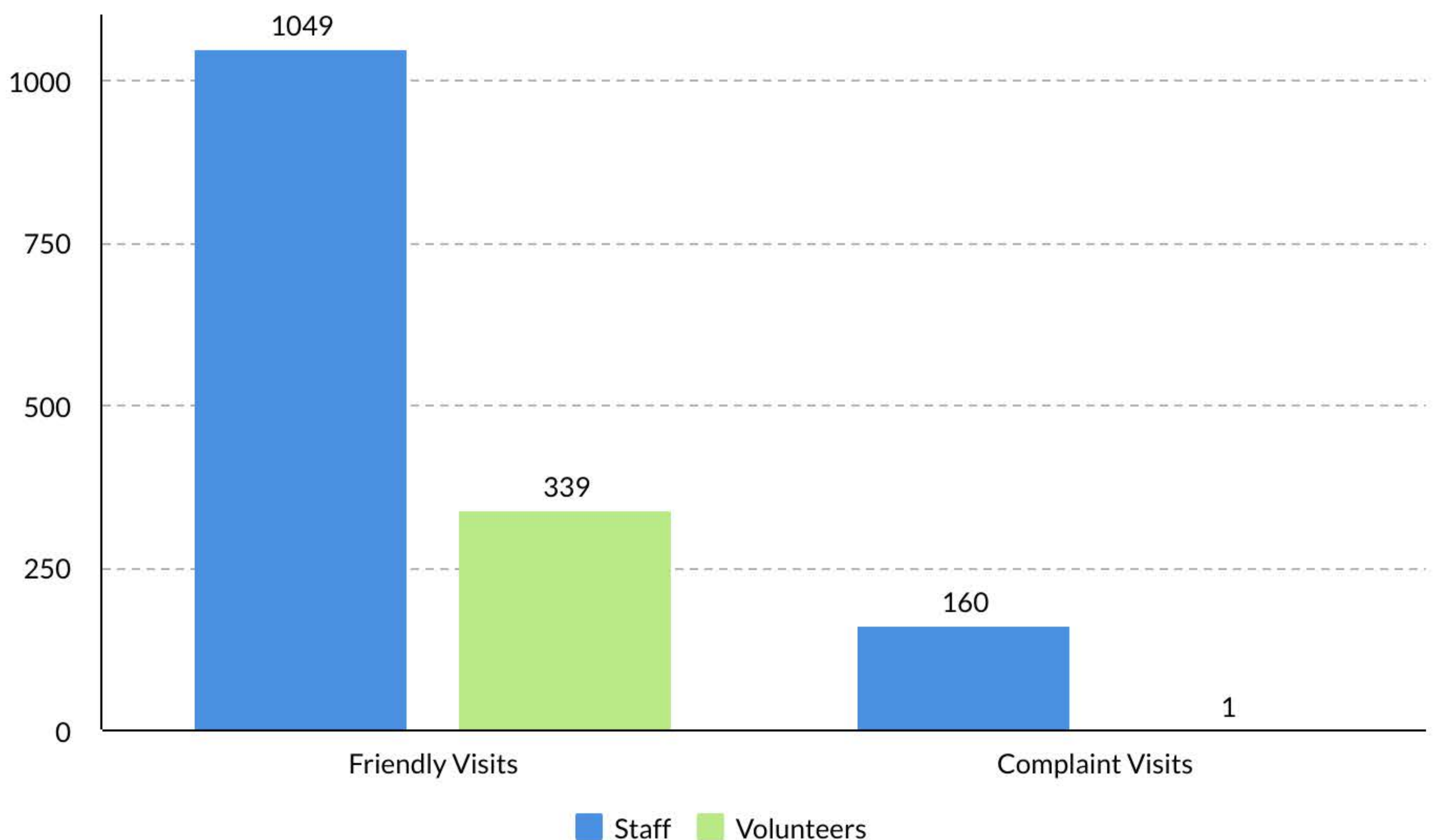
**#5** Ability to exercise rights & personal choice



# Who Submitted the Complaints in 2019?



## Facility Visits By the Numbers







## Ombudsmen in the Community



- 19 Nursing Facilities with 692 residents
- 27 Communities throughout Alaska
- 308 Assisted Living Homes with 3,463 residents
- Territory of 663,267 square miles
- Averages to 1,385 residents per LTC Ombudsman



346

Information and  
Referrals



298

Provider  
Consultations



20

Educational  
Community  
Events/ Training



# SYSTEMS CHANGE

## Program Management

- **Ombudsman Suicide Protocol**

Alaska has one of the highest suicide rates across the nation. It was important for the Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman to create a protocol and to train staff and volunteer Ombudsmen on dealing with the issue of suicide. The OLTCO developed a guide for LTCOs when residents threaten suicide. The office staff and volunteers have now been trained on the suicide guide and protocol. The training was provided in one of our monthly volunteer trainings and is now provided in all new volunteer Ombudsman training. Ombudsmen are more prepared to deal with threats of suicide as a result of the protocol and the training.



## Working with Resident Councils

- **Created a Culturally Appropriate Resident Council Toolkit for Resident Councils**

The Nursing Home Reform Law (OBRA '87) guarantees nursing home residents a number of important rights to enhance residents' lives in a nursing facility. Key among these rights is supporting residents to form councils where residents can privately discuss recommendations to improve the quality of life for all residents of the facility. The Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman contracted with Rider Consulting to create a Culturally Appropriate Resident Council Toolkit to help guide resident leaders (and facility staff) in setting up resident councils which included working with Alaska Native and American Indian Elders. The toolkit is designed for residents and staff that support Councils and administrators. The toolkit includes several videos, a staff manual and a council assessment tool for residents and administrators. The OLTCO has uploaded the final version of the staff manual and videos to the OLTCO website ([www.akoltco.org](http://www.akoltco.org)). We will also be sharing a hard copy and an electronic version of the toolkit with each resident council and facility administrator during our visits to facilities.





## Collaboration with Other Organizations/Agencies

- **Alaska Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injury Advisory Committee**

The Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman's Office is a participant of the Alaska Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injury (TABI) Advisory Committee. The State of Alaska received a three-year grant to create a state plan for TABI. Goals have been developed and as we move into our second year, we are in the process of building on those goals for each identified areas of prevention, awareness, resources, data and infrastructure. The state plan will advocate for and support the vision of creating a comprehensive service delivery system for individuals with TABI.



- **Continuation of our involvement with Guardianship Systems reform - WINGS**

The State Long Term Care Ombudsman worked with the State of Alaska Court staff to obtain a Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) grant. The State LTC Ombudsman is on the steering committee and participates on all of the individual committees. The WINGS group worked on the implementation of the Supported Decision Making Agreement (SDMA). The second annual SDMA conference was held to educate the public on supported decision making.



- **Continuation of the Emergency Preparedness Efforts**

Emergency Preparedness continues to be an essential focus for the Alaska OLTCO since experiencing a 7.0 earthquake on November 30, 2018. The OLTCO continues to be involved in emergency preparedness training and other ongoing efforts across the state. Our next goal is to work with partner agencies to ensure that assisted living homes have a checklist or an emergency planning guide to assist them in dealing with emergencies. The State LTC Ombudsman held a training on Emergency Preparedness at the 2019 Aging and Disability Conference on Emergency Preparedness.





# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **For Continued Systems Change**

- Continue to advocate, in public policy arenas, for the interests of elders living in long term care facilities.
- Continue educating residents living in long term care settings and their families on their rights.
- Gather stakeholders to develop a plan to improve long term care services to elders with mental health or behavioral challenges.
- Continue to develop and disseminate emergency preparedness/response information to residents and long term care facilities to assist them to be prepared for an emergency, pandemic or natural disaster.
- Continue to work on guardianship systems reform with the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) to improve and ensure that guardianships are safe and supportive.

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