

**17—8.5 (231) Authority and responsibilities of the department.**

**8.5(1) Confidentiality and disclosure.** The complaint files maintained by the resident's advocate/ombudsman program shall be maintained as confidential information and may not be disclosed unless the resident's advocate/ombudsman authorizes disclosure.

*a.* No member of the resident's advocate/ombudsman program shall disclose the identity of any complainant or resident, or any identifying information obtained from a resident's personal or medical records unless the complainant or resident, or the legal representative of either, consents in writing to the disclosure and specifies to whom the information may be disclosed.

*b.* The resident's advocate/ombudsman may use materials in the files for the preparation and disclosure of statistical, case study and other pertinent reports provided that the means of discovering the identity of particular persons is not disclosed.

**8.5(2) Referral of complaints or grievances.**

*a.* When the resident's advocate/ombudsman or designee encounters facts which may indicate the failure to comply with state or federal laws, rules or regulations, the resident's advocate/ombudsman or designee shall refer the case to the appropriate agency.

*b.* When the resident's advocate/ombudsman or designee encounters facts that may warrant the institution of civil proceedings, the resident's advocate/ombudsman or designee shall refer the case appropriately for administrative and legal assistance.

*c.* When the resident's advocate/ombudsman or designee encounters facts which may indicate the misconduct or breach of duty of any officer or employee of a long-term care facility or government agency, the resident's advocate/ombudsman shall refer the case to the appropriate authorities.

*d.* The resident's advocate/ombudsman or designee shall initiate follow-up activities on all referred complaints and grievances.

**8.5(3) Reporting.** The resident's advocate/ombudsman program shall maintain a statewide, uniform reporting system to collect and analyze information on complaints and grievances regarding long-term care facilities in accordance with requirements of the Act and Iowa Code section 231.42.

*a.* Information provided by the department of inspections and appeals, individuals and agencies to whom cases were referred, resident advocate committees and the volunteer long-term care ombudsman program shall be used in the reporting system.

*b.* No information from this reporting system that threatens the confidentiality of residents or complainants shall be made public without the written permission of the affected residents or complainants.

*c.* Any information from this reporting system which identifies a specific facility shall state that problems identified in that facility have been corrected, if problems identified have been corrected to the satisfaction of the resident or complainant or pursuant to 17—9.13(231).

*d.* The complaint and grievance documentation and reporting system shall include, where available:

- (1) The source and date of the complaint or grievance;
- (2) Name, location and type of facility;
- (3) Facility licensure and certification status;
- (4) Description of the problem;
- (5) Billing status of the resident;
- (6) Method by which the complaint was received; and
- (7) Description of follow-up activities and date of resolution.

*e.* The resident's advocate/ombudsman program shall prepare an annual report analyzing complaint statistics collected and provide this report, by January 15 of each year, to the following agencies and others as deemed appropriate, including but not limited to: AOA, the office of the governor, the general assembly of Iowa, the department of inspections and appeals, the department of human services, and AAAs.

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