

# Ensure the health and safety of older Wisconsinites

## STATE ISSUE BRIEF

**The Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) provides necessary support for Wisconsin citizens.**

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program plays a critical role in addressing the **health, safety, welfare** and **rights issues** that older adults face. This budget request for additional ombudsmen and infrastructure staff **addresses the most serious challenges facing older adults** and would contribute to the stabilization of long-term care services in Wisconsin.

### WAAN's position:

Allocating appropriate resources to BOALTC ensures Wisconsinites will have the necessary support they need to navigate the challenges of the ever-changing long-term care and insurance systems.

Through the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Volunteer Program, BOALTC is charged with providing advocacy to more than 125,600 constituents statewide in long-term care, managed care and in the IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct) self-directed care program. The agency also operates the Medigap Helpline, which serves the state's 1.3 million Medicare beneficiaries.

*Did you know?*  
**Ombudsman** is a Scandinavian term for "voice of the people"

Despite steady and ongoing demographic growth in the numbers of persons and types of settings served, **the last significant increase in Ombudsman resources was in 2016.**

BOALTC no longer has sufficient capacity to continue to meet the needs of those that it is mandated to serve and is unequipped to respond to demographic growth and changing long-term care systems without these additional resources.

**Critical Need: Wisconsin has only 1 Regional Ombudsman for every 6,600 constituents they are mandated to serve.** This is only 1/3 of the national minimum staffing ratio for Ombudsmen, as defined by the Institute of Medicine.

In addition to the large number of constituents being served by a limited Ombudsman workforce, BOALTC staff are increasingly required to prioritize their casework. Crisis situations resulting from increased acuity, or intensity of needs, are made more complex by trauma, neglect, abuse, financial misappropriation, unstable mental health and/or substance use disorder.

### National Minimum Staffing Ratio



Wisconsin is operating at **only 1/3** of the national minimum staffing ratio for Ombudsmen.

**Min. staffing ratio:** 1 Ombudsman for every 2,000 clients  
**Current ratio:** 1 Ombudsman for every 6,600 clients

**Demographic Projections:** Current demographic projections indicate a substantial increase to the aging population of Wisconsin in coming years, particularly in the state’s most rural and underserved counties. Wisconsin’s 65+ population is expected to grow by 72% between 2015 and 2040. Approximately 70% of those aged 65+ will require long-term care services.

BOALTC must be adequately staffed to engage in and respond to these changes to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the most vulnerable older adults in Wisconsin.

**Solution:** BOALTC requests the resources to establish a strong statewide infrastructure to support its essential advocacy work through 9 key FTE positions:

Those positions include:

**Constituent Services support:**

- 4.00 FTE Ombudsman Services Specialist: direct-service staff to respond to urgencies related to health, safety and welfare
- 1.0 FTE Ombudsman Services Specialist – Advanced: training lead to manage provider and community training

**Policy and Administrative support:**

- 1.0 FTE Communications Specialist – Senior: manage agency communications
- 1.0 FTE Program & Policy Analyst – Advanced: fulfill statutory mandates to monitor and respond to critical policies and legislation impacting older adults
- 1.0 FTE Executive Assistant: support executive functions
- 1.0 FTE Operations Program Associate: intake triage

**Requested position goals:**

- Keep up with continuing demographic growth.
- Mitigate life-threatening abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Enable Ombudsmen to be preventative vs. reactive, contributing to the statewide stabilization of long-term care services.
- Meet obligations under Wis. Stat. § 16.009.

BOALTC has reached a critical point where additional Ombudsman and infrastructure staff are essential to ensure the health, safety and well-being of current and future older adults in Wisconsin. **Allocating appropriate resources to BOALTC will provide necessary support for long-term care residents and contribute to the stabilization of the ever-changing long-term care and insurance systems.**

**National Minimum Visitation Guidelines**



**With current staffing levels, it is impossible to meet the national minimum quarterly visitation standards.**

**Current staffing levels:** 17 Regional Ombudsmen  
**Avg. # of Facilities Assigned:** 350 facilities per Ombudsman

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**Core member organizations**

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW) • Alzheimer’s Association Wisconsin Chapter Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) • Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA) • Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) • Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS) • Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND) • Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC) • Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) • Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) • Wisconsin Senior Advocates • Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA) • Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

**Mission**

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) works with and for all older adults by educating community members and policy makers on priority issues while advocating for meaningful change. Learn more at [gwaar.org/waan](https://gwaar.org/waan).