MEETING MINUTES

WEST COAST DISTRICT (6)
PINELLAS COUNCIL
DATE 08/13/2026
TIME: 12:00 PM- 2:30 PM
Location: 11351 Ulmerton Rd. Conference Room #136/137
Largo, FL 33778

COUNCIL MEMBERS- ATTENDEES			
Volunteers		**Staff**	
Jane Horowitz- **STATE REPRESENTATIVE**	N	Rebecca Liebson	N
Christine Sproule/ Council Chair	Y		
Susan Rodman	N	Olympia Morris	N
Mary Stein	Y	Tina Rouissiya	Y
Sharon Foster	Y	Rachelle Hutchens	Y
Della Eversole	Y	Miriam Cova de Stoisavlejevic	Y

GUESTS	
NAME	**AGENCY**
• Ellen Cheek & Maria Carruba-Fuentes	Bay Area Legal Services

1. Call to Order

Meeting opened with a presentation from **Bay Area Legal Services** on legal resources available to long-term care residents and coordination procedures with Ombudsman representatives.

2. Bay Area Legal Services Overview

- LSC-funded legal aid program serving vulnerable seniors.
- Senior Advocacy Unit assists clients with **60+** (some programs begin at 55).

3. Legal Issues Handled

Bay Area supports residents with:

- Transfer/discharge disputes
- Social Security, SSI, Medicare, Medicaid
- Foreclosure & landlord-tenant issues
- Advanced directives & POA
- Relative caregiver matters
- Disaster-related legal needs
- Veteran's legal issues

Residents often maintain community ties requiring legal intervention.

4. Eligibility & Case Opening

- Ombudsman **does not determine eligibility**.
- Screeners assess eligibility based on funding, age, income, and program criteria.
- High call volume may result in waiting times.
- Attorneys must speak with the resident or legal representative.
- POA/guardianship documents must be validated; recent POAs may require physician confirmation.

5. Ombudsman Referral Protocol

- Ombudsman consent forms allow Bay Area to contact residents directly.
- Ombudsman may assist with signatures, forms, and resident access.

6. Importance of Representation

- Residents represented by Ombudsman or legal counsel have significantly better outcomes.
- Many facilities misunderstand discharge regulations, allowing improper notices to be challenged.

7. Transfer/Discharge Cases

- Nursing homes follow CMS and Florida statutes; only **six valid discharge reasons**.
- ALFs have minimal protections under Chapter 429; advocacy focuses on dignity, safety, and property preservation.

Recommendation: Always file a hearing request within 10 days of a nursing home discharge notice to preserve housing and allow legal review.

8. Hearing Procedures

- Hearings may be in person, phone, or teleconference.
- Residents may attend or decline.
- Ombudsman may assist with arranging private rooms or participation.

9. Coordination

Strong collaboration between Ombudsman and Bay Area continues to produce successful outcomes.

PART II – COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS

10. Review of Minutes & Materials

- No corrections to previous minutes.
- Updated volunteer contact list distributed (3 volunteers in Classroom training).
- Updated LTCOP contact sheet and facility lists provided.

11. AHCA Survey Results

- AHCA surveys reviewed; members reminded to check complaint and licensing surveys during visits.

12. State Referral Updates

- Follow-up provided on **The Villages** case; state visit expected this week.

13. Supplies & Resources

- Folders, forms, Ombudsman pins, Resident Council President pins, and activity books available for volunteers.

14. State Ombudsman Program Update- Presented by Council Chair, Christine Sproule, in behalf of Jane Horowitz, State Ombudsman.

- State seeking **three Members-at-Large** (community members only).
- Council meets quarterly: three virtual, one in person.

15. Certification & Attendance

- Council Protocols reviewed- Policies and Rules of Ombudsman program revised.
- In-person attendance encouraged for learning and case collaboration.

16. Resident Council Support
Members reminded to:

- Review Resident Council Handbook with presidents.
- Provide recognition pins.
- Reinforce proper resident-led meeting procedures.

17. Office Hours & Communication

- DOM continues processing intakes and assigning cases.
- Volunteers may contact DOM for assistance or special needs.

18. Training & GetCare Documentation

- Monthly communication training: last Thursday (Teams)/month.
- Weekly GetCare training: Tuesdays at 2 PM.
- Volunteers should check Teams calendar.

19. Case Discussions

- Ombudsman investigation standards emphasized: **Ombudsman advocate for residents only. Resident consent is required. No consent = no case.**
- Volunteers encouraged to contact DOM/ROM when uncertain.
- Collaboration remains essential for effective advocacy.

20. Adjournment
Meeting adjourned.