

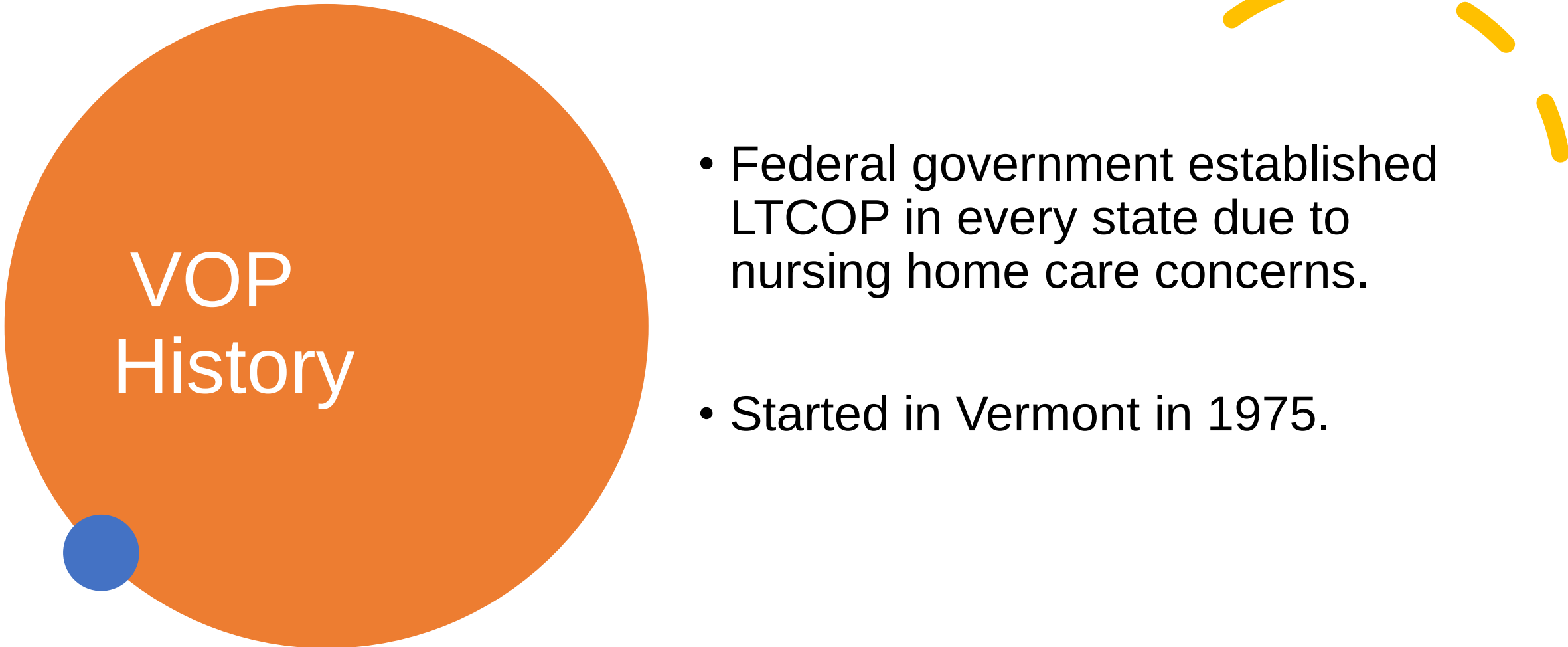
Vermont Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (VOP)

Presenter:

Kaili Kuiper, State LTC Ombudsman

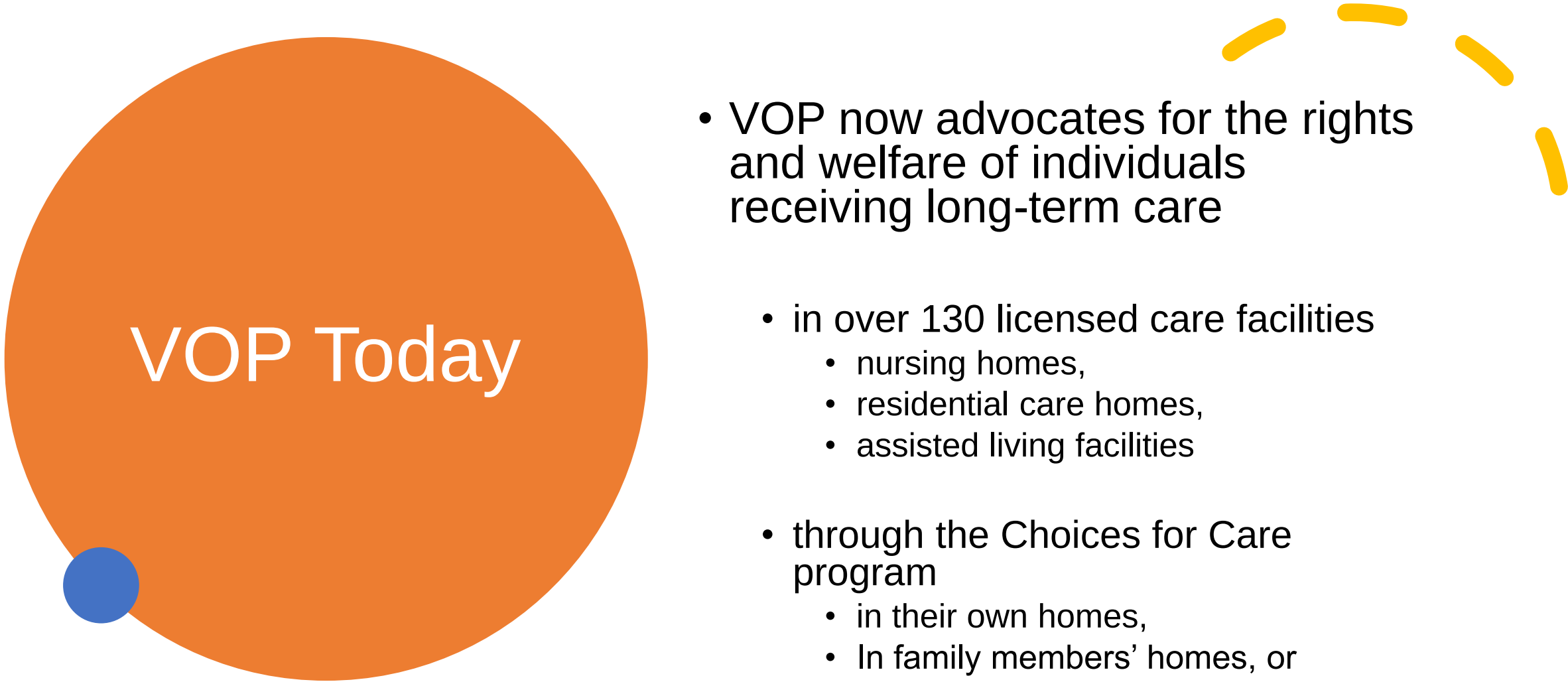
February 18, 2026





VOP History

- Federal government established LTCOP in every state due to nursing home care concerns.
- Started in Vermont in 1975.



VOP Today

- VOP now advocates for the rights and welfare of individuals receiving long-term care
 - in over 130 licensed care facilities
 - nursing homes,
 - residential care homes,
 - assisted living facilities
 - through the Choices for Care program
 - in their own homes,
 - In family members' homes, or
 - Adult Care Homes

LTC Ombudsmen also

Monitor

- Visit with residents in long-term care facilities to monitor conditions

Educate

- Educate individuals, including providers and program volunteers, about residents' rights and quality care

Improve

- Identify systemic problems and advocate for laws and policies that strengthen residents' rights, improve care, and lead to a better quality of life for Vermonters receiving long-term care services

LTC Ombudsmen Role

Ombudsmen

- Provide **person-centered advocacy** for long term care recipients
- **Take direction from the recipient** to solve their complaints and meet their goals
- If the recipient is unable to give direction, we may take direction from their legal representative

The VOP Team

- Seven Local Long-Term Care Ombudsmen
 - **Michelle Carter** (State-Wide Helpline Coverage)
 - **Dawn Donahue** (Washington, Lamoille, and Orange Counties)
 - **Terry Kalahar** (Chittenden, & Grand Isle Counties)
 - **Randi Morse** (Franklin, Essex, Orleans, and Caledonia Counties)
 - **Alicia Moyer** (Windham & Windsor Counties)
 - **Nadia Lucchin** (Bennington County)
 - **Kerry White** (Rutland & Addison Counties)
- One State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
 - **Kaili Kuiper** (State-Wide Project Director)



VOP Stories FY2025: How Ombudsmen Solve Vermonters' Long-Term Care Problems

Avoiding Facility Eviction
(Involuntary Discharge)

Dignity, Respect, and
Self-Determination

Quality of Care

VOP and Age Strong Vermont

Age Strong Vermont's Principles for Aging Well:

- Financial Security
- Optimal Health & Wellness
- Social Connection & Engagement
- Housing, Transportation, & Community Design
- Family Caregiver Support
- Self-Determination
- Safety & Protection
- Coordinated & Efficient Systems of Service



Financial Security

- LTC Ombudsmen
 - resolve billing disputes between clients and long-term care providers, often concerning large sums of money,
 - help clients regain access to their money, ensure clients have a voice in how their money is spent, and
 - intervene when the client is concerned that their representative is mishandling their money.
- The Ombudsman Program worked on 40 complaints related to financial and property concerns as well as an additional 8 financial exploitation complaints in FY25.

Optimal Health & Wellness

- LTC Ombudsmen
 - intervene when staff are not responding to residents' requests for help,
 - compel facility care providers to address client's unmet healthcare needs,
 - facilitate care planning, and
 - ensure that care plans are followed.
- The Ombudsman Program worked on 146 complaints related to quality of care and access to care and another 40 complaints about food in FY25.

Social Connection & Engagement

- LTC Ombudsmen help residents access friends, family, and favorite activities within and outside of the facility.
- The Ombudsman Program worked on 25 complaints related to activities, community integration, and social services in FY25.



Housing, Transportation & Community Design

- LTC Ombudsmen
 - assist residents with discharge appeals when the facility tells the resident they have to leave their home,
 - Intervene when there are issues with the condition of the facility, and
 - help to resolve disputes between residents and the facility that could lead to an involuntary discharge.
- The Ombudsman Program worked on 48 complaints related to discharge, and 18 complaints regarding living spaces in facilities in FY25.

Family Caregiver Support

- LTC Ombudsmen
 - work with clients' family members and friends to understand and resolve issues.
 - take direction from a client's representative, family member, or friend when a client is unable to give direction or the client asks us to take direction from a specific person.
- The Ombudsman Program worked on 198 complaints received from resident representatives, friends, and family members in FY25.

Self-Determination

- LTC Ombudsmen
 - Take direction from the care recipient,
 - intervene when facilities fail to uphold residents' rights and allow them to make decisions regarding their lifestyle and care,
 - provide clients with information and advice about their rights, and
 - conduct trainings for residents and staff on resident rights.
- The Ombudsman Program worked on 82 complaints specifically related to Autonomy, Choice, and Rights in FY25.

Safety & Protection

- LTC Ombudsmen
 - intervene when a client wants protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation,
 - help connect clients to the appropriate agencies, like police, Adult Protective Services, and Medicaid Fraud and Residential Abuse Unit, and
 - connect clients to legal services if they need to change a guardian or power of attorney.
- The Ombudsman Program worked on 19 complaints related to abuse, gross neglect, and exploitation in FY25.

Coordinated & Efficient Systems of Service

- LTC Ombudsmen
 - spend time with residents in every licensed long-term care facility in Vermont and listen to their concerns.
 - directly address care recipients' concerns or help the residents connect to appropriate community resources.
 - participate in a long list of workgroups, committees, and councils to highlight the needs of long-term care recipients.
 - help clients avoid hospitalizations and homelessness through monitoring and advocacy.
 - help ensure that the large sums of state and private money going into long-term care result in good quality care.
- The Ombudsman Program documented over 300 instances of information and advice to individuals, and over 200 consultations with facility and Choices for Care provider staff in FY25.



Vermont Ombudsman Program's Funding Request for SFY27:

\$275,000 added to base budget



- SFY27 will be three years since our last increase.
- We will need to lay off staff in FY27 if we do not receive this increase.
- The LTC Ombudsman Program needs sufficient staff to monitor over 130 long-term care facilities and meet with residents in person across Vermont.

- . “[Our Ombudsman] prioritized [my mother’s] voice, despite her vascular dementia and aphasia, at a critical time when she felt she had no voice. Please keep up the good work on behalf of Vermont's elders.”



Vermont Ombudsman Project

Vermont Legal Aid

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