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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Community Living

Administration on Aging

Agency Information Collection Activities; Public Comment Request; State Annual Long-Term Care Ombudsman Report and Instructions

AGENCY: Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging, HHS.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Administration on Aging (AoA) is announcing that the proposed collection of information listed below has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Submit written comments on the collection of information by

[INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments on the collection of information by fax

202.395.5806 or by email to OIRA_submission@omb.eop.gov, Attn: OMB Desk Officer for ACL.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Louise Ryan, telephone: (206) 615-2514; e-mail: louise.ryan@acl.hhs.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In compliance with 44 U.S.C. 3507, AoA has submitted the following proposed collection of information to OMB for review and clearance.

States provide the following data and narrative information in the report:

1. Numbers and descriptions of cases filed and complaints made on behalf of long-term care facility residents to the statewide ombudsman program;
2. Major issues identified that impact the quality of care and life of long-term care facility residents;
3. Statewide program operations; and
4. Ombudsman activities in addition to complaint investigation.
5. A new requirement to include organizational conflict of interest reporting as required by the reauthorized Older Americans Act and the LTC Ombudsman program rule at 45 CFR 1324.21.

The report form and instructions have been in continuous use, with minor modifications, since they were first approved by OMB for the FY 1995 reporting period. This current request is for a Revision of a Currently Approved Collection (ICR Rev), which will provide approval for FFY 2016-2018 with modifications to include organizational conflict of interest reporting as required by the reauthorized Older Americans Act, Section 712(f) and the LTC Ombudsman program rule at 45 CFR 1324.21.

The data collected on complaints filed with ombudsman programs and narrative on long-term care issues provide information to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and others on patterns of concerns and major long-term care issues affecting residents of long-term care facilities. Both the complaint and program data collected assist the states and local ombudsman programs in planning strategies and activities, providing training and technical assistance and developing performance measures.

Comments in Response to the 60 day Federal Register Notice

A notice was published in the Federal Register / Vol. 81, No. 126 / Thursday, June 30, 2016 Notices, Pages 42712-42713, announcing that AoA was requesting modification of the current form and instructions to incorporate conflict of interest reporting requirements, directing readers to the AoA website where these documents are posted and providing an opportunity for public comment. One comment was received from the National Association of Ombudsman Programs (NASOP).

NASOP members disagreed with the burden estimate developed by AoA, stating:

Because an overwhelming majority of state long-term care ombudsman programs designate local ombudsman entities, those circumstances lead to a greater likelihood of organizational conflicts of interest. The burden is compounded by the number of local ombudsman entities within a state and will have multiple sources of reporting organizational conflicts at local or regional levels up to the states before states can report via NORS. Further, because approximately half of state long-term care ombudsman programs are housed within an umbrella agency, this also increases the likelihood that state programs have multiple organizational conflicts that must be identified, remedied or removed, and reported via NORS.

In response to NASOP's concerns about burden estimates, we made a change in our estimated burden hours from one-half hour per state to one hour per state.

NASOP requested additions to the instructions and report form such as the ability to certify that there was no change in conflicts/remedies from the previous reporting year; and to allow for the ability to report a conflict and remedy that applies to many entities as a reporting entry. These suggestions were helpful and were incorporated into the instructions and form. They did not affect the estimated burden.

NASOP also recommended that AoA/ACL add a reporting option in a check box to indicate a state has identified a conflict, but the conflict has not been remedied. We do not intend to take this recommendation because it would be contrary to the rule and law which require states to identify, remove or remedy conflicts and to report on such remedies. ACL is providing on-going technical assistance to states on the implementation of the Ombudsman program rule, including technical assistance on conflicts of interest and steps to remedy any identified conflicts.

A reporting form and instructions may be viewed in the ombudsman section of the AoA website: http://www.aoa.acl.gov/AoA_Programs/Elder_Rights/Ombudsman/index.aspx

AoA estimates the burden of this collection and entering the additional report information as follows: Approximately 10 to 60 minutes per respondent, depending on the number of conflicts to report, with 52 state Ombudsman programs responding annually. This brings the total burden hours to approximately 7,753 hours, (149 hours on average per program) with 52 Offices of Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs responding annually.

Summary	Local Ombudsman Programs	Office of State Ombudsman	Total Burden Hours	52 Programs
Hours	132.1	17	149.1	7753 hours

Dated: October 12, 2016.

Edwin L. Walker
 Acting Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging.
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