



# Patient Ombudsman

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Better Experiences  
Better Health Care



May 2025  
Ontario Association of  
Residents' Councils

# Land Acknowledgement

Together, let us now pause as we acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today, from wherever we are virtually participating in today's meeting. Let us take a moment to acknowledge the importance of the land we each call home.

We do this to affirm our commitment and responsibility to improving relationships between nations, and to improving our own understanding of local Indigenous Peoples and their cultures.

We acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people who call this nation home.

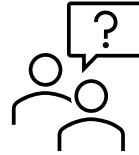
Let us now join in a moment of reflection to acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and to consider how each of us, in our own way, can move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

# Webinar Housekeeping



## Chat Box

The Chat feature is **disabled** during this session.



## Question Box

Type questions in the Q&A box.  
We will answer as many as possible during the presentation.



## Recording

A recorded version of this webinar will be available on OARC's website.  
[www.ontarc.com](http://www.ontarc.com)



## Evaluation

After the webinar, a pop-up screen asking you to complete a survey will appear. Your feedback and suggestions are appreciated.

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# What is an ombudsman office?



## **Ombudsman or ‘ombuds’ offices operate independent of government to:**

- Ensure people are treated fairly by public bodies;
- Promote fairness and accountability in public administration; and
- Provide independent and impartial oversight of government services.

## **Key features of ombuds work:**

- Independence, impartiality and confidentiality.

## **Ombuds typically operate within a legislated mandate that:**

- Defines its jurisdiction, accountabilities and powers.

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# What's a health care ombudsman office?



## **A health care ombudsman is:**

- Focused entirely on receiving and resolving complaints from patient, residents and caregivers.
- Committed to using the insights gathered to improve the quality of health care experiences for everyone.
- Capturing the unique perspective complaints offer for the purposes of quality improvement.
- Able to learn from individual experiences to identify themes and trends requiring deeper investigation.
- Finding resolutions that result in updated policies and procedures, staff training and education, and improved processes.
- Investigating and making recommendations that lead to systemic change across the health care system.

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# Patient Ombudsman's Mandate



## ***Excellent Care for All Act (ECFAA) 2010 directs Patient Ombudsman to:***

- Receive and resolve health care complaints
- Conduct investigations and make recommendations for health system change
- Serve as an 'office of last resort'

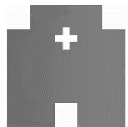
## **Vision**

A health care system where everyone is treated fairly.

## **Mission**

We resolve health care complaints, share information, and make recommendations to improve the health care experience for everyone.

# Patient Ombudsman's Jurisdiction



## Public Hospitals

- **140** hospital corporations operating 300 sites, including psychiatric hospitals



## Long-term Care Homes

- **630** municipal, not-for-profit and for-profit long-term care homes constituting 80,000+ beds



## Home and Community Care

- **14** HCCSS organizations and other community agencies that provide home care services



## Community Surgical and Diagnostic Centres

- **900+** community surgical and diagnostic centres (Integrated Community Health Services Centres Act of September 2023)

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# Role as 'Office of Last Resort'



**Before accepting a complaint, it typically must meet the following criteria:**

- Complaint **has been raised** with the health sector organization
- Complaint **is not solely about** a regulated health care professional's clinical decision making or professional conduct (e.g., doctor, nurse, MRT)
- Complaint **is not being reviewed** by another oversight body (e.g., Public Health) or part of an existing legal proceeding. (e.g., lawsuit)

Complaints are often complex involving referrals, information sharing and accommodation of an individual's unique circumstances



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# The Patient Ombudsman's office:

## Does:

- Rely on facts and fairness rather than look for fault when seeking a resolution.
- Ask for consent before sharing personal or personal health information with organizations.
- Provide referral information for non-jurisdictional complaints and facilitate warm hand-offs when appropriate.
- Encourage patients, residents and caregivers to call our office if they have questions.

## Does not:

- Accept or investigate every complaint received.
- Submit complaints/referrals on behalf of complainants if our office is not the appropriate complaints body.
- Force or compel health service organizations to act or adopt our recommendations.
- Give legal advice.
- Take sides or advocate for one party over another - we remain impartial and unbiased.

# Ways to Make a Complaint



**Toronto: 416-597-0339**  
**Toll free: 1-888-321-0339**



**[www.patientombudsman.ca](http://www.patientombudsman.ca)**  
**[info@patientombudsman.ca](mailto:info@patientombudsman.ca)**



**Mail**



**In Person by  
Appointment**



**Fax**

**English and French  
Speaking Staff**

**Simultaneous  
Translation Services**



**Resources in 22  
Languages**

**6 Indigenous  
Languages**

# Annual Report Data

2023/24

## Meeting the Call

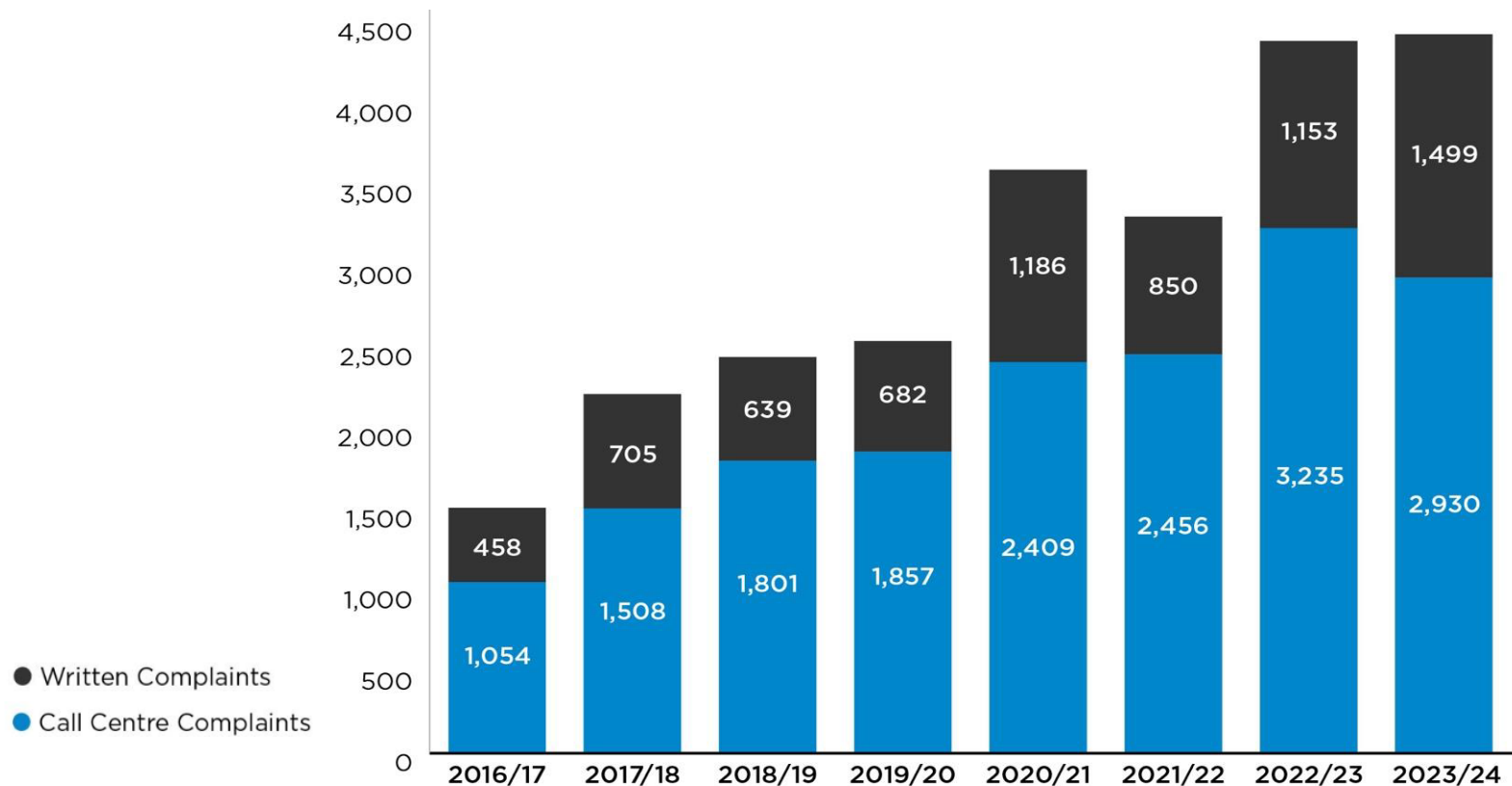


Patient  
Ombudsman

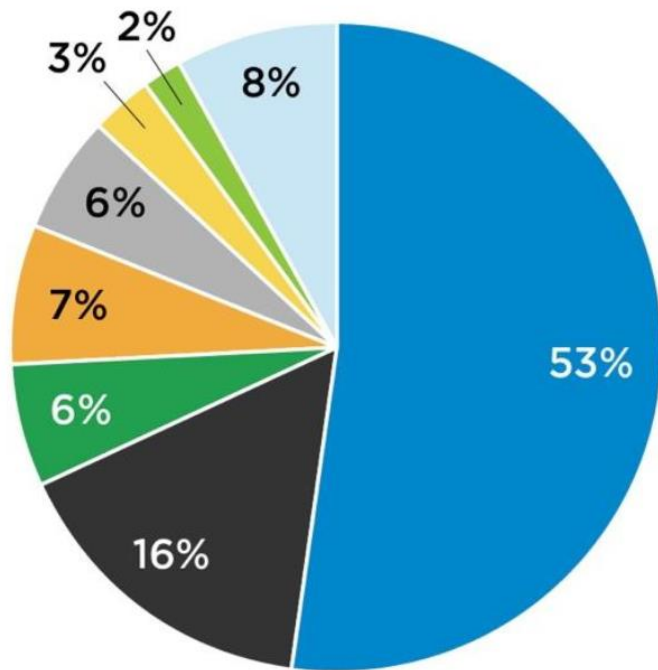


Annual Report 2023/24  
Better Experiences  
**Better Health Care**

# Annual Growth in Complaints

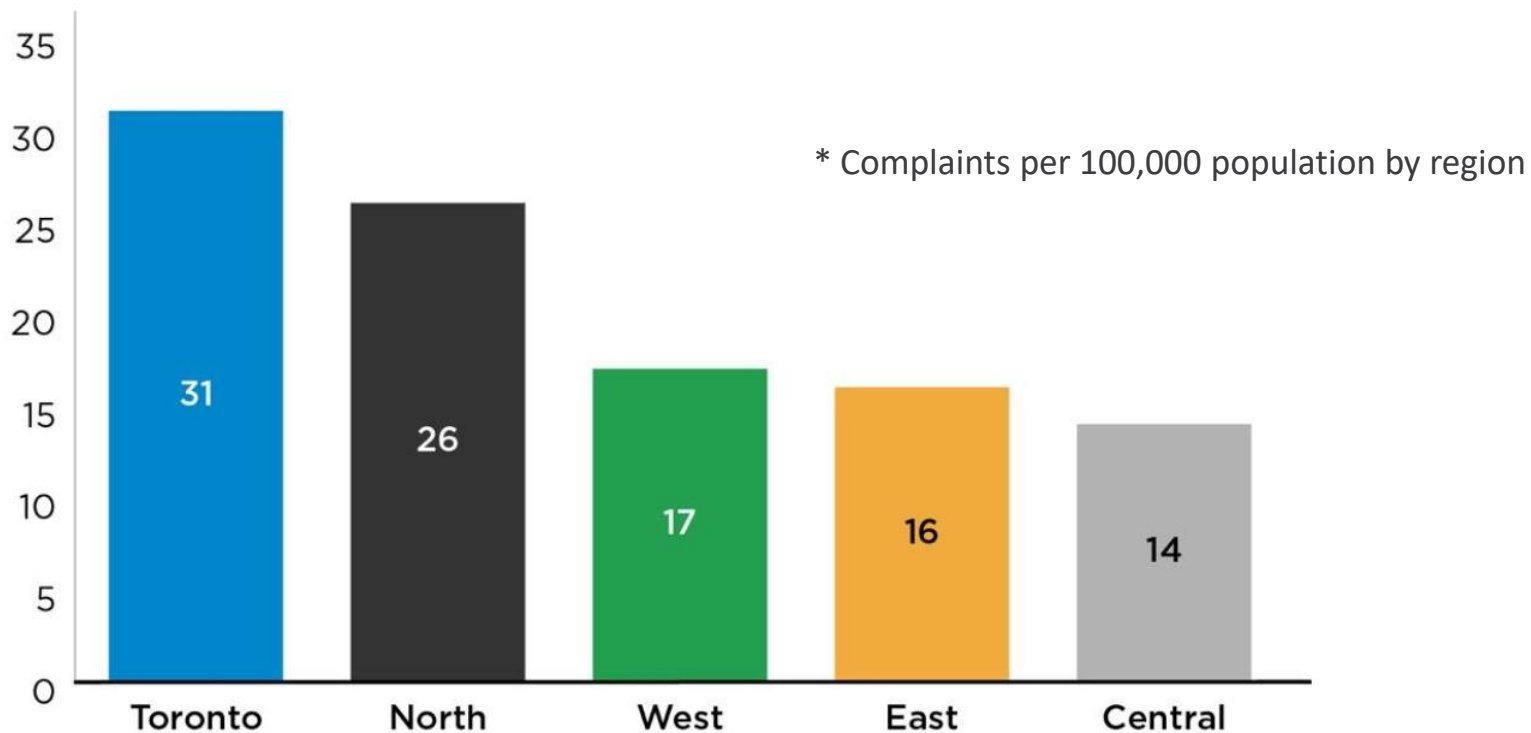


# Who Contacted Patient Ombudsman?

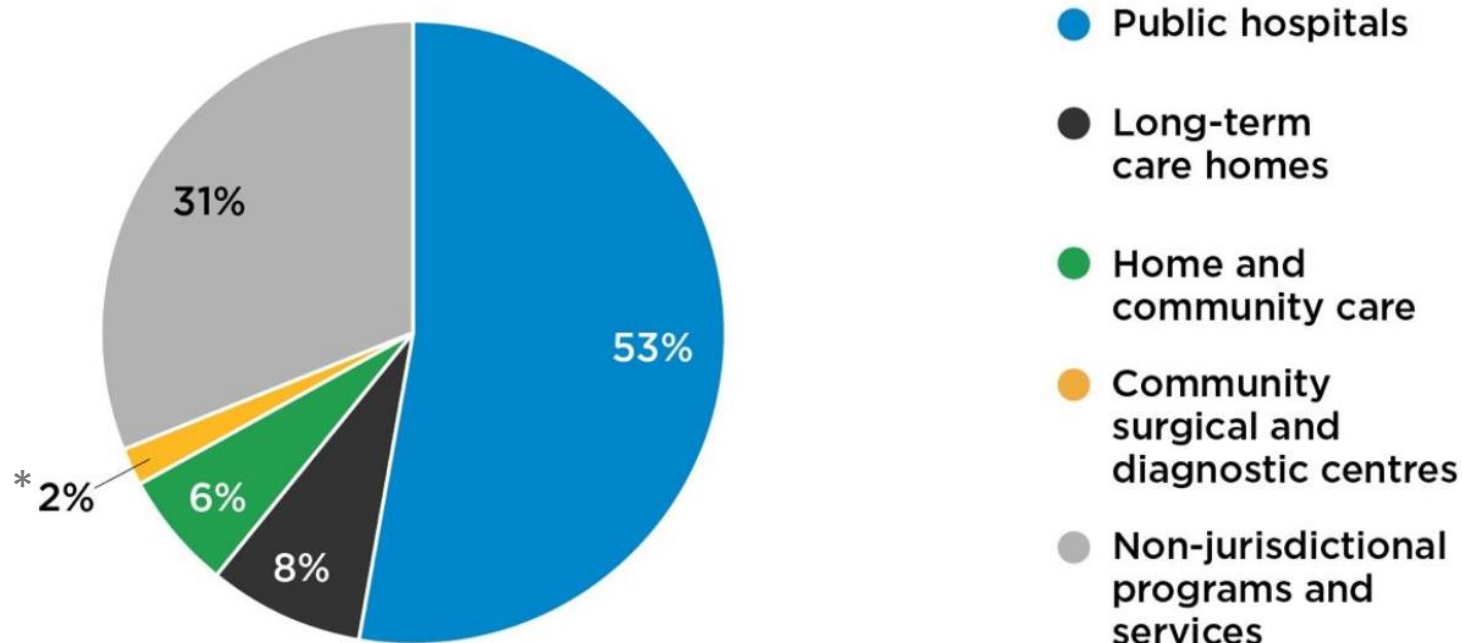


- Patient/resident
- Daughter/son of patient
- Partner/spouse
- Parent/guardian
- Other family member
- Care/service provider
- Other
- Unknown

# From What Region?



# Complaints by Health Sector



\*only represents data September 2023-March 2024

# Top 5 Complaints by Health Sector

## ● Public hospitals (2,463 closed complaints)

### Top Complaints

1	Quality of care	29.0%
2	Diagnosis/treatment	12.8%
3	Sensitivity/caring/courtesy/respect	9.3%
4	Discharge/transfers/transitions	8.5%
5	Patient/resident information/records	5.2%

## ● Home and community care (260 closed complaints)

### Top Complaints

1	Coordination/continuity	20.4%
2	Quality of care	16.9%
3	Discharge/transfers/transitions	12.3%
4	Access or admission	10.4%
5	Communication	8.8%

## ● Long-term care homes (365 closed complaints)

### Top Complaints

1	Quality of care	36.7%
2	Communication	7.7%
3	Abuse/assault	5.5%
4	Discharge/transfers/transitions	5.2%
5	Personal security or safety	4.7%

## ● Community surgical and diagnostic centres (66 closed complaints)

### Top Complaints

1	Communication	24.3%
2	Delay	9.1%
3	Sensitivity/caring/courtesy/respect	9.1%
4	Access or admission	7.6%
5	Coordination/continuity	7.6%



# 2023/24 LTCH Complaint Subject Descriptions

Top Complaints	Description
Quality of care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes substandard care, poor pain or symptom management, skin care/wound management.</li></ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Breakdown in communication: poor information sharing with family.</li><li>• Cultural or language barrier (including lack of interpreter services).</li><li>• No opportunity to have questions answered, lack of participation in care planning. Delayed or inadequate info re: discharge or service plan changes.</li><li>• Incorrect or inconsistent information.</li></ul>
Abuse/assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any report of verbal, physical, sexual or financial abuse or assault by a patient/resident, caregiver or provider/staff.</li></ul>
Discharge/transfers/transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Premature, late or poorly planned discharge or transfer; required services not in place; inappropriate/unsafe discharge of unstable or high-needs patient/resident.</li><li>• Lack of communication about discharge, transfer, or transition plan.</li></ul>
Personal security/safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Falls, poor fall prevention, accidental injury, environment or events alleged to threaten safety, failure to provide a safe environment.</li></ul>

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# Complaint Themes – Long-Term Care



# What Patient Ombudsman Does

## Resolving complaints 2023/24



Contact the Home



Research Options  
and Solutions



Request and Review  
Records

Participate in  
Meetings

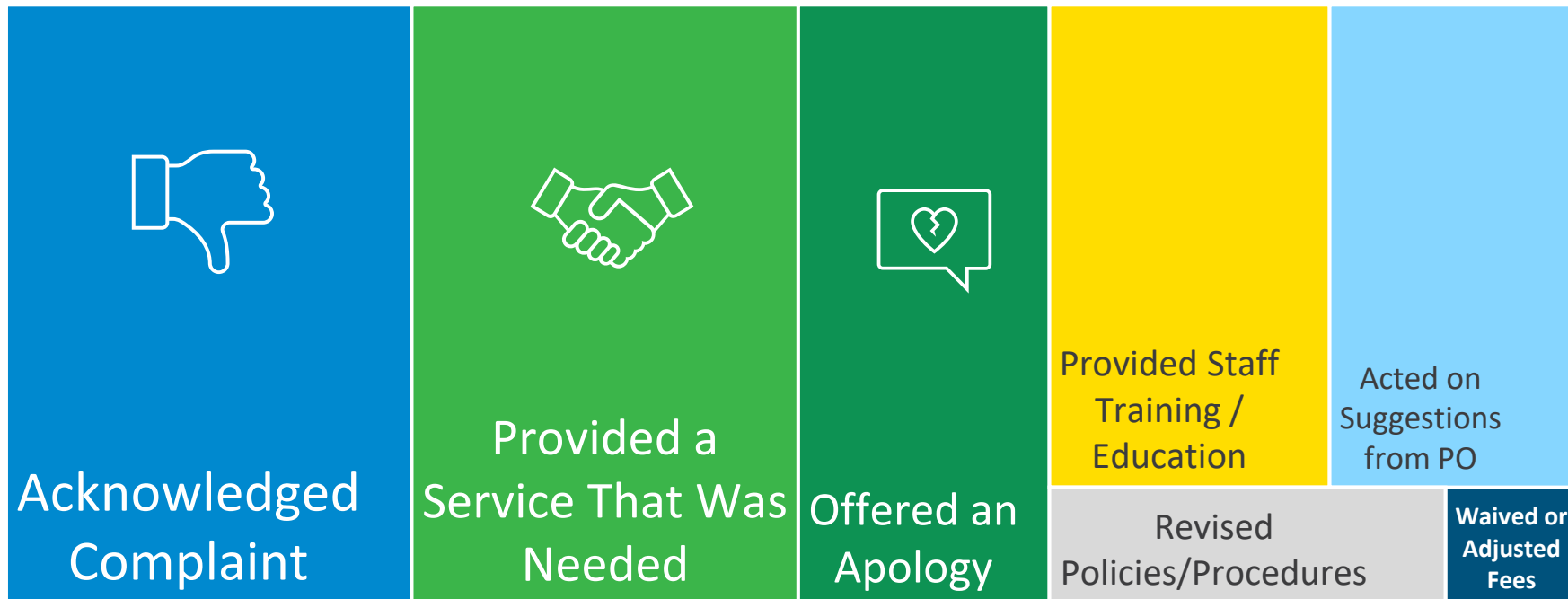
Make  
Suggestions

Facilitate  
Meetings

Initiate Mandatory  
Reports

# What Health Organizations Did

## Resolving complaints 2023/24



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# Have questions? Contact Us



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