



# DHS News

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## **AAA introduces Addie, a new way to support individuals in care facilities**

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) will soon be welcoming a new member to their ombudsman team: Addie the Advocate.

Ombudsmen are state-certified advocates for individuals in long-term care facilities as well as consumers who receive care in their homes. Since the start of the pandemic, ombudsmen have been unable to do their typical in-person visits and have been relying on phone calls with consumers, an approach that offers limited privacy and lacks the personal touch.

To better meet the needs of ombudsmen and residents, AAA has used grant funding to purchase Addie the Advocate, a telepresence robot. Addie comes with a microphone, speakers, camera and an iPad screen that will allow residents to have "face-to-face," real-time conversations with their ombudsman – all without requiring the ombudsman to enter the building. The software used on Addie is HIPAA-compliant and uses secure streaming to ensure confidentiality.

"The addition of a PadBot to the team allows all of the ombudsmen the opportunity to safely visit facilities again. Most of these facilities and residents know their ombudsman, and with the use of the tablet, they will be able to see a friendly face again. Many facilities only have phones available in common areas, but the PadBot will now provide an opportunity to have a conversation to discuss concerns or complaints in the privacy of the residents' own rooms. It may also reach residents who are unaware of the services ombudsmen perform, and address concerns that would otherwise go unreported due to the lack of in-person visitation. We feel this addition sends a powerful message to residents and administrations alike that the ombudsmen continue to be available to assist and advocate for all residents in long-term care facilities," said Jeff Dimeolo, ombudsman supervisor at the Area Agency on Aging.