



Effective Resident Councils

Residents of long-term care facilities have the right to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives. Staying involved creates a sense of being in control and has a positive impact on physical and mental health. One way for residents to be involved in making decisions that affect the quality of their care is to participate in the resident council. Resident Councils can promote the person-centered philosophy of care giving.

The purpose of the resident council is to provide a forum for residents to express themselves and suggest positive changes that will benefit the quality of life for all residents. An effective resident council reflects and meets the needs of the residents it serves. Resident councils are successful if they meet the needs of the residents in a particular home; therefore, there are several models for a resident council.

Functions of a Resident Council

- Meet regularly, usually at least once a month
- Participate in decision-making that affects the environment, care, and treatment of all residents
- Verbalize concerns and support one another
- Ask questions and make recommendations to the facility regarding collective concerns
- Obtain information from facility staff on issue that impact residents
- Form committees to address special interests (i.e. food committee)

Models of Resident Council Structure

- Highly Structured – has bylaws, officers, committees
- Informal Structure – no bylaws, officer, committee, and can be led by a staff person who believes residents should be express concerns and wishes
- Town Meeting Model – effective in smaller homes where each resident is considered a member and encouraged to attend
- Representative Model – effective in larger homes where representatives from various areas of the facility are elected to represent other residents
- Committee Model – six to ten residents serve on committees that function similar to the representative model

Resident councils may have their own ideas about structuring a council or may pick certain parts of the above models to structure a council that meets the needs of its residents. Whatever model is chosen, it is important that it be flexible enough to allow for change if the needs of the residents are not being met.

Keys to Effective Resident Councils

- Resident council is presented in a positive, enthusiastic manner to residents, families, staff, and administration
- All residents are invited to participate in the council either through their attendance at the meetings or through opportunities to express their ideas and suggestions to residents who do attend
- Ideas, suggestions, and concerns are conveyed to administration in a positive manner
- Administration listens and acts upon ideas, suggestions, and concerns
- New residents are informed about the resident council, its accomplishments and successes, and are encouraged to attend council meetings

Keys to Effective Resident Council Meetings

- Meetings are scheduled at regular times and locations
- Meetings include a planned agenda or program
- Meetings are conducted in an orderly way giving everyone who wishes to speak an equal opportunity
- Basic parliamentary procedures can keep the meeting organized and allows all residents to participate in the decision-making process
- Staff persons and ombudsmen attend council meetings if invited
- Resident leadership is preferred, however, an interested, committed staff person or volunteer can provide leadership

Facility Role in Resident Councils

- Provide private space for the council to meet without interference
- Designate a staff person to provide assistance and respond to requests that result from the meeting
- Communicate decisions about recommendations

For more information

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