Resident and Family Advisory Council Education

Resident Council Manual

About Resident and Family Advisory Council Education (R-FACE)

The Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care is a service of the Minnesota Board on Aging. The Office advocates for adults needing or receiving long-term care services and promotes person-directed living that respects individual values and preferences and preserves individual rights.

The Office provides educational resources and support to persons who live in nursing homes and boarding care homes and their families about:

1. Self-advocacy in relation to quality of care and life;
2. Rights and responsibilities;
3. Care and services;
4. Regulations that apply to homes and residents; and
5. Resident and Family Council organization and maintenance.

This service is called R-FACE: Resident and Family Advisory Council Education and has been in operation since 1985 (Minnesota Statutes 144A.33.)

For more information on Resident and Family Advisory Council Education (R-FACE) or to request R-FACE educational resources contact the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care

(651) 431-2555 or (800) 657-3591

Website: www.mnaging.org

Email: MBA.OOLTC@state.mn.us.
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RESIDENT COUNCIL OVERVIEW

A Resident Council operates by and for residents. Councils are an independent group of people who live in nursing homes and boarding care homes who advocate for the well-being of all residents. A Council offers a forum for residents to be part of decision-making within their own home.

Resident Council Purpose
A resident council has many purposes, such as:

- Empower residents to improve their quality of life and exercise their rights
- Promote friendships and understanding among residents, families and friends
- Suggest improvements in services, practices and policy to the home’s staff and administration
- Provide important information that affects all residents
- Exchange (non-confidential) news about residents, staff and new project
- Enable connections to the community through sponsored events
- Raise funds for council projects or activities

Communal living in a nursing home is a partnership of cooperation, communication and companionship among residents and staff. Ideally, residents look out for each other and discover friendships in this new “home” community. Moving into a congregate setting may be difficult – and participating in the council may ease this adjustment.

Resident Councils can significantly influence resident self-advocacy, self-empowerment and resident directed decision-making and living. Residents have the answers and the Resident Council is their voice.
Every Resident Council is unique and members decide how to organize and function. Some councils meet monthly with an agenda and some use the Learning Circle to conduct meetings or gather information. Some may elect leaders and create committees. Hosting an educational topic or planning a special event are common council functions.

In partnering with staff, residents have the power to ensure that their rights are being honored in day to day life, creating a home in which residents enjoy living, families enjoy visiting and employees enjoy working.
Resident Council Benefits:

- Empowered residents tend to be happier and healthier because they have control over their lives and the ability to influence what happens in the home.
- Empowered residents are active and engage in camaraderie among other residents, families, friends and staff.
- Empowered residents alert the home’s administration to problems and are partners in problem-solving.
- Empowered residents are informed about the home’s operations and participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- Empowered residents may likely speak favorably to visitors about their home-like environment.

Why Residents join the Resident Council

"It's a place to find out what I need to know, to find out what's going on - to hear the news about the home."

"I have a curious mind, so I try to find out what it's all about."

"It's a place where I can see my friends."

"We have needs here that I feel are not being taken care of. I want to see if anything can be done about this."

"We can solve most of our problems here."

"We learn about our rights."
The Nursing Home’s Responsibilities:

- Administrator designates a staff person to be a liaison between the council and the administration
- Designated staff person (Staff Liaison) provides assistance for council meetings and responds to written requests that result from group meetings
- Provides a private space for council meetings
- Respects staff or visitors attendance only with the group's invitation
- Acts upon the grievances or recommendation of residents and families concerning proposed policy and operational decisions that affects resident care and life

Culture Change and Resident Councils

Culture change works to create home wherever elders live to transform services to be person-centered or person-directed. This approach values the voices of individuals needing services and those working closest with them. Culture change involves continuous listening, trying new approaches and changing routines and organizational structures in an effort to individualize and de-institutionalize care and services.

Person-directed care and services values dignity, respect, purposeful living and freedom to make informed choices about daily life and health care. Care and services are directed by and centered on the person receiving them.

With culture change, true relationships develop and flourish between residents and staff and a true sense of belonging and community flourish. This includes meaningful involvement of the residents’ families, friends and the greater community in which the home is located. (Adapted from the Pioneer Network.)

Resident Council members are empowered by the culture change philosophy and by culture changes initiatives within their home to fully engage in meaningful changes and creation of authentic person-directed living.
Organizing a Resident Council

- Talk with other residents; two or more residents are enough to begin planning;
- Ask the administrator to assign a staff liaison;
- Engage the Staff Liaison to assist in organizing meeting & arranging a private space;
- Decide on the date, time and agenda for the first meeting;
- Post this information in resident accessible locations;
- Make sure residents with vision loss receive this information verbally and
- If interested, invite staff (employees or volunteers of the home) and visitors.

When councils are new or when no resident agrees to facilitate council meetings, the group can facilitate them, run the meetings without a facilitator or, members can ask the Staff Liaison, a local Long-Term Care Ombudsman or other qualified volunteer to facilitate. The Staff Liaison is not a member of the council and may only attend with the invitation of council members.

Resident Council Membership and Leadership
Council members share these traits and tasks:

- Understands that the council represents every resident.
- Knows the resident council’s purpose and benefits.
- Believes the council can positively impact resident life.
- Displays a positive attitude and enthusiasm.
- Inspires members toward their common goal of quality of life and services
- Understands and promotes Resident Rights and respects confidentiality.
- Encourages all members to speak freely about their care or situation.
- Listens and communicates well; identifies facts, clarifies what is heard and said.
- Maintains objectivity and leads members to agreement.
- Welcomes members to invite their family and friends to council meetings.
- Works collaboratively with the staff liaison and administration.
### Resident Council Attendance and Recruitment Ideas

- Send invitations to every resident. See Resident Council Resources for a sample invitation.
- Personally review the benefits with each resident.
- Inform residents and staff about the role and benefits of the council.
- Regularly promote the council to encourage resident participation.
- Post announcements on every bulletin board and activity calendar.
- Include council information in the new resident packet.
- Talk about the council's successes during resident events.

Residents who don’t attend regularly can still be involved by meeting with council members to discuss concerns, discussing ideas with the staff liaison or be surveyed about issues. This information can then be shared at the next council meeting.

### FIRST RESIDENT COUNCIL MEETING

#### Planning the Meeting

- Decide (at least temporarily) the day of the week, time of day, frequency and length of regular meetings.
- Announce and post the meeting notice where residents will see it;
- Verbally inform residents who have vision loss;
- One or two days prior to the meeting, consider personal invitations or reminders;
- Verify the meeting space with the staff liaison;
- Ask the staff liaison for assistance when necessary.
During the Meeting

- Invite each resident to introduce her/himself and invite a brief remark about their interests or background. A Learning Circle may be used for introductions. (See Resident Council Resources.)
- Explain the role and benefits of a Resident Council.
- Ask a resident to facilitate the current meeting.
- At this or a later meeting, agree upon a resident who is willing to serve as a regular Council meeting facilitator and the length of time in this role. **Or, consider:**
  - Two residents as co-facilitators
  - Council members rotate as a facilitator
  - Ask or invite a Certified Ombudsman Volunteer (COV) to be a regular or occasional facilitator
    (Some homes have a COV assigned to the home by the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care who meets regularly with residents. This volunteer **is not** a volunteer of the home.)

- Discuss taking notes or minutes (this isn’t required but having them may help track what occurs during meetings.)
- Discuss the use of a Learning Circle at each meeting.
- Discuss or decide having officers such as a president or vice president, treasurer or recorder. Officers are not necessary but may give structure to the council. Officers may also function in the facilitator role as described above.
- Distribute and review Resident Rights. Consider a formal presentation on rights at a later meeting by the Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman.
• Solicit and discuss ideas about what topics, issues or concerns to address. Gather this information from residents through individual interviews, a discussion group or a survey.

• Decide details of regular council meetings: frequency, day, time of day and length. This decision may be delayed until a second or third meeting when more residents may be in attendance.

• Discuss the idea of creating committees to address topics that are short-term or permanent. These decisions may naturally occur as topics and concerns arise.

• Discuss the best method to communicate concerns or ideas to the administration. Some councils use the Council Action Form (see Resident Council Resources); the home’s grievance form; or some ask the staff liaison to report progress on issues verbally at each meeting.

After the Meeting

Retain minutes or documentation of requests for action by staff, agendas, submitted Council Action Forms and or the home’s grievance forms.

The staff liaison is responsible for responding to written requests from council meetings while being mindful that specific details of discussion held during council meetings are confidential.

Discussing and Identifying Shared Interests

When starting a new council or renewing the purpose of an existing one, be mindful of listening for individual and common interests as well as concerns expressed by members.

Responses help determine the Council’s purpose and goals or topics to address immediately or later. Residents who express having limited opportunity to make meaningful decisions should prompt immediate council attention, discussion and action.

In summary, an effective council promotes resident self-determination, dignity of each person and quality of life by advocating these values on behalf of all residents.
Promoting Your Resident Council

To determine how well residents are aware of the Council, ask

- Do all residents know about the council?
- Is each resident invited to attend?
- How many residents participate?
- Do residents know about council accomplishments?
- Do residents know when and where the council meets?
- Do residents receive assistance in getting to meetings?
- Does staff promote and encourage resident participation in the council?

Discussion ideas:

- Are menu choices satisfying?
- Are additional activities or events wanted?
- Are residents getting needed exercise?
- Is resident privacy respected?
- Are resident requests for help promptly answered?
- Does the home reflect a comfortable and cheerful environment?

Other discussion topics:

- Physical comfort and safety
- Enjoyment or contentment
- Meaningful activity
- Atmosphere of dignity and respect
- Individuality
- Autonomy/choice
Resident Volunteer Opportunity: Council Ambassador

A Council Ambassador functions as a goodwill ambassador to encourage resident and family participation in Council meetings; and works directly with the council members and the staff liaison.

The Council Ambassador role is a Resident Council decision and appointment. This role doesn’t usurp the role of council officers, if any. As a representative of the Resident Council, a Council Ambassador is courteous, respected by other residents and communicates well.

### Council Ambassador tasks may include:

- Maintains current council information on the council bulletin board.
- Meets new residents to tell them about the council and welcomes their attendance.
- Contacts new family members to tell them about the Family Council and welcomes their attendance.
- Writes articles about the council for the home’s newsletter.
- Informs members about council events and activities.
- Writes announcements or notices about council meetings and activities.

### Resident Council Goals or Priorities

Ideas for resident empowerment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolving general care/service concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Are my favorite foods and beverages available?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What happens when no one responds to my requests for assistance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do I find missing clothing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can my spouse visit every day?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where do I buy a card or gift?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting activities and interests to enhance quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can I continue my interest in gardening or painting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can my spouse visit every day?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are cultural events offered?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Letter writing campaign to local newspaper about an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sharing individual resident stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offering education and Informing residents (inviting guest speakers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Resident Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Changes in the home’s policies or operation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Political candidates’ debates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Engaging people from broader community helps residents feel part of the entire community and reminds visitors to value residents as part of their community.

**Overcoming Obstacles and Building Trust**

Resident Council members and any resident may face these challenges:

- Fear of retaliation by the home’s staff and
- Resistance from staff or limited assistance.

Fear of retaliation (real or perceived) happens when we think speaking out may result in a negative outcome. If staff exhibit verbal and nonverbal signs of retaliation to either or both you and your family you are protected by federal law from retaliation which requires the home’s leadership to promptly address this problem. Arrive a meeting with the administrator or other key staff to discuss these concerns and invite the Regional Ombudsman as the facilitator. Another resource is the Office of Health Facility Complaints at the Minnesota Department of Health.
Addressing a Concern and Reaching a Solution

✓ Identify and define the problem or concern from the residents’ perspective. The resident council determines whether a concern is an isolated event, an ongoing problem for one person or a concern of several residents.

✓ Compile a list of action steps for a solution. Discuss all ideas and the likely advantage or disadvantage of each. Do you want further investigation or recommended solutions to the concern(s)?

✓ Choose the best option. At this point, decide to informally present the issue (by talking with the administrator or key department head) or formally by using the Council Action Form or the home’s Resident Complaint Form.

✓ Make a copy of the Form to retain with the Council records.

✓ Give the Form to the staff liaison or other designated staff. Be willing to meet with staff to discuss the concern(s).

✓ Evaluate satisfactory resolution of the problem. If not resolved, why not?

✓ Request assistance from the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care. A Regional Ombudsman is assigned to advocate for residents in every Minnesota home.

By law the administration must respond to your concern and resident and family groups working together can be a strong collective voice to influence positive changes.

If the administration does/t support the council or respond to its concerns, the Regional Ombudsman at the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care can suggest a course of action.

Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care
(651) 431-2555 or toll-free (800) 657-3591
Email: MBA.OOLTC@state.mn.us
Website: www.mnaging.org
Other Resources:

- **Minnesota Department of Health** licenses and certifies nursing homes and boarding care homes and reviews Resident Council minutes as part of the survey process. The management of a home cannot interfere with a council.

  Telephone: Licensing and Certification Unit: (651) 201-4101

  [http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fpc/profinfo/lic/licnh.htm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fpc/profinfo/lic/licnh.htm)

- **Office of Health Facility Complaints**, Minnesota Department of Health accepts complaints about alleged violations of resident rights and regulations from individuals and the council itself.

  Telephone: (651) 201-4201 or toll-free: (800) 369-7994


- **Stratis Health** is Minnesota’s Medicare Quality Improvement Organization which works with consumers (including nursing home residents) and providers (including nursing homes) to improve health care.

  Telephone: (952) 854-3306 or toll-free (877) 787-2847

  [http://www.stratishealth.org/about/index.html](http://www.stratishealth.org/about/index.html)

- Minnesota Board of Examiners for Nursing Home Administrators licenses nursing home administrators.
  Telephone: (651) 201-2730


- Minnesota Board of Nursing licenses registered nurses and licensed practical nurses.
  Telephone: (612) 317-3000 or toll-free: (888) 234-2690

## Resident Council Committees

**Welcome Committee** – Welcoming new residents may include personal visits to offer friendship and support; assistance with social gatherings to welcome residents and family members; or accompanying new residents to a meal or planned activity and distributing a written invitation about the date, time, place and purpose of the council.

**Ad Hoc Committees** are those established for a specific, temporary purpose such as working on voter registration, organizing a candidate’s forum or giving suggestions on dining room redecorating.

**Recreation or Social Committee** – Residents help plan and coordinate with staff events such as picnics, trips to local venues or inviting guest speakers or performers.

**Grievance Committee** – In this committee, residents listen to concerns and report to the appropriate department supervisor then relays the results of these discussions at council meetings. They publicize the Residents' Bill of Rights and communicate the needs of residents who wish to remain anonymous.

**Sunshine Committee** – This committee sends greeting cards to residents and whomever they choose. This can be a popular and valuable service that promotes a sense of belonging within the home.

**Dietary Committee** – Members of this committee meet with the dietary supervisor typically once a month to convey food concerns, review menus and give suggestions about meals and snacks, then shares this information at council meetings.

## The Home’s Committees

**Culture Change Committee** – “Culture Change” is a philosophy of living that is person-centered and person-directed. Resident input is inherent to Culture Change initiatives. Residents, whether or not they participate in the Resident Council, can participate in this committee of the home.

**Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Committee** – Residents can request to serve on this committee to give valuable input about significant quality of care and quality of life information from the resident point of view.

**The home’s committees and confidentiality:** When a resident serves on a home’s committee, there is a confidentiality protocol for all participants. The protocol may state that resident or family may participate only during non-confidential discussion and may include signing a confidentiality form.
Working with your Staff Liaison (SL)

The Staff Liaison is the home’s employee assigned or “designated” to

- Provide assistance and private space for Resident Council meetings and
- Respond to requests resulting from council meetings.

The Staff Liaison is not expected to attend Council meetings and, in fact, can only attend by invitation from the RC. The SL role is to be of assistance to residents to the extent residents want assistance. Residents can invite the SL to meetings as a listener.

Resident Councils are resident run and directed. Therefore, the staff liaison role does not include facilitation of council meetings unless invited by the council. When functioning as a facilitator, the staff liaison should encourage or remind members to choose a resident facilitator.

Appropriate Tasks for a Staff Liaison/Designated Staff
Primarily tools for the Staff Liaison include the Resident Council Manual and Resident Rights.

- Help members with administrative Council tasks
- Assist members with problem-solving concerns
- Maintain confidentiality of discussions within council meetings
- Assist with the recruitment of members and leaders
- Promote awareness and appreciation of the Council (resident run and directed)
- Explain the home’s policies and procedures
- Inform members of changes/decisions in the home
- Recognize members for their successes
- Be an effective liaison between the RC members and senior management
- Facilitate group process by Council invitation only

Other Staff Liaison Tasks, if requested by the Resident Council

- Assist in typing and posting/distributing accessible Council meeting announcements (inform in-person residents who have hearing loss)
- Assist in typing Council meeting notes/minutes for RC record retention and for inclusion in the resident newsletter
- If requested, invite guest speakers
Important Skills for a Staff Liaison/Designated Staff

- Embrace and promote the philosophy of resident empowerment
- Be of service to residents
- Respect resident autonomy
- Respect the Council role and functions
- Build trust through confidentiality of resident council meetings
- Maintain integrity by acting only on information requested by the Council
- Work with residents toward continuous quality improvement
- Promote the RC at various resident events
- Good communicator and active listener
- Ability to organize and follow through with Council requests
- Be positive, honest and objective

Other Ways to Promote Councils

- Inform all staff: direct care staff, housekeeping and maintenance staff, senior management, owner or board of directors about the Resident Council purpose and support its operation
- Include RC information in the new resident welcoming packet
- Invite a RC member to new staff orientation to explain the RC role
- Give the Staff Liaison time and tools for a successful Resident Council
- Invite Resident Council leaders to staff meetings and visitors
- Engage council members to serve on various initiatives of the home
- Respond promptly to RC concerns and requests
Resident Council Role in the Inspection & Survey of Homes

In 1987 the U.S. Congress passed major reform of nursing home regulations including “inspections” or “surveys.” These inspectors or surveyors use the standards of care and services to measure the home’s performance.

The Resident Council as a group may request to meet with the surveyors. This is a valuable opportunity to share council meeting concerns (including any recorded meeting notes or minutes); Council Action Forms or the home’s grievance forms that reflect resident concerns and accomplishments, and assistance from the staff liaison.

State of Minnesota surveyors

- Review various records,
- Observe care and services given to residents
- Interview staff and
- Interviews with residents (and families) (with their consent) about the care and services and their opinion on their quality of life and individualized treatment.

Survey dates are not pre-announced to staff or residents. Residents and family members may request an interview on the day the surveyors arrive at the home. The Regional Ombudsman or their designated Ombudsman Volunteer may assist in helping you contact the surveyors.

Your name is kept confidential when you talk to a surveyor and is not included in the public report of the survey.

At the end of the survey an Exit Conference is held for surveyors to review their initial findings with the home’s administration. All residents, their families, the Regional Ombudsman or Ombudsman Volunteer may attend but are not invited to speak. Once the public report of the survey is completed and is received by the home, it must be posted in a public location.