



Everyone Wins !

Benefits

For Families:

- ◆ Orientation, support, and information for the families of new residents.
- ◆ Ongoing mutual support-- strength drawn from shared experiences.
- ◆ Education and information related to the long term care system, e.g. residents' rights, Medicare reimbursement, etc.
- ◆ A means to express concerns and solve problems.

For Residents:

- ◆ Family input into care decisions and facility changes.
- ◆ Council sponsored activities and events to supplement the activity program.
- ◆ Support and protection for residents who do not have concerned families or friends.
- ◆ A connection to the community outside the facility.

For Facility Staff:

- ◆ Two-way communication between the facility and families.
- ◆ The council can be a sounding board for new ideas.
- ◆ Family input to aid staff in problem-solving.
- ◆ Means to know residents and families better-- their past experiences, likes and dislikes, etc.
- ◆ Family council may sponsor staff appreciation events.



I CARE

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I CARE is the long-term care ombudsman program that provides services free of charge under the auspices of the Illinois Department on Aging and sponsored by the Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation.

The I CARE area includes the counties of **Cass, Christian, Greene, Jersey, Logan, Macoupin, Mason, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Sangamon** and **Scott**.

Locally the program is provided by Retired Teachers Association units and AARP chapters 393 and 195.

"The IRTAF does not discriminate in admission to programs or activities or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act; the U.S. Civil Rights Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; The Age Discrimination Act; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; and the U.S. and Illinois Constitutions." If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have a right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department on Aging. For information call (800) 252-8966 (Voice and TDD), or contact Field Representative at (217) 223-7904 or (800) 252-9027.

The I CARE program, in its mission to protect and defend the rights of nursing home residents, supports the establishment of family councils in every long-term care facility to ensure long-term care facility residents receive the quality of care and the quality of life to which they are entitled - individualized quality care.

Volunteer resident advocates visit facilities regularly to address residents' concerns and assure residents' rights.

Family Councils

For Families of
Long Term Care Facility
Residents

If we're really going to provide for quality of life for older adults, we need to provide for quality of life for families.

-- Family Member





Family Council?

Definition

A family council is an **independent (self-led and self-determining)** group of families and friends of residents that together protect and improve the quality of life for residents and provide families with a voice in decisions that affect their loved ones.

A family council can be the catalyst to assuring residents receive care that meets their individual needs, preferences and schedules.

A family council may select whatever name it chooses. It can be called Family Support Group, Friends of Residents, or Quality of Life Advocates, etc. The family council's name is less important than its ability to function effectively and independently.

Rights

Families are guaranteed the right to form and hold regular meetings of a family council in the 1987 Nursing Home Reform Law. Federally certified facilities **must promote and support family councils** and non-certified facilities should want to support family councils by:

- ◆ Providing private space within the facility for a family council to meet privately;
- ◆ Designating a staff liaison to provide assistance when needed. **Facility staff can attend meetings only when invited**; and
- ◆ Listening and responding to the grievances and recommendations of residents and families concerning resident care and life in the facility.



Getting Started

First Steps

- ◆ Ask family members of facility residents to join you in starting a family council.
- ◆ As a group of families, approach the facility administrator about starting a family council. The support of the administrator can only positively affect a family council's success.
(NOTE: Support does not imply attendance at council meetings. Staff can attend meetings only when invited.)
- ◆ Contact your local ombudsman for technical support, information, and resources.
- ◆ Set a time for the first meeting.
- ◆ Request the facility provide a meal for the initial meeting.
- ◆ Publicize the meeting by posting flyers, handing out invitation, face-to-face contact with visiting families, announcements in the facility newsletter and local newspapers, etc. Ask the facility to send a letter to all family members along with the billing.

Meeting

- ◆ Explain the importance of group independence.
- ◆ Explain the benefits of a family group.
- ◆ Establish ground rules for sharing concerns. It will be important to allow time for individual concerns, but the council must go the next step and work with the administrator to improve identified problems.
- ◆ Appoint a temporary chair, vice chair and secretary until the group is organized.
- ◆ Make arrangements for the next meeting.



Staying Vital

Next

Keeping Families Interested and Empowered

- ◆ Council meetings should be scheduled regularly enough to hold families' interests.
- ◆ Develop and follow an agenda at each meeting.
- ◆ Continue recruitment efforts--posters, face-to-face contact, council information included in admissions packet, etc.
- ◆ Identify 1 or 2 facility-wide concerns and develop strategies and action plans to improve conditions.
- ◆ As a group, take concerns to staff, establishing a strong, cooperative link between facility staff and family members.
- ◆ Plan special events and activities to supplement the facility activity program and to avoid focusing solely on individual concerns.
- ◆ Have educational/informational sessions about facility and long-term care issues.
- ◆ Establish a system to address individual concerns, e.g. a committee or occasional set times during meetings to discuss individual concerns.
- ◆ Meet regularly with the local ombudsman for technical support and to identify valuable resources.
- ◆ Develop a system (e.g. phone tree, e-mail) to reach council members for support and problem resolution outside of the regularly scheduled meeting times.
- ◆ The key to moving away from an individual concern focus is to inform and empower families to be their own advocates.