

SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Recruiting and Maintaining Family Council Members
- Conducting Effective Meetings
- Building a Collaborative Relationship With Management
- How Can Family Councils Support Family Members and Friends (Residents) In Care

TOPIC: Recruiting and Maintaining Family Council Members

Recruiting New Members

- Personally welcome new families
 - assign a family council member as mentor to a new family
 - provide information about your family council; when and where you meet, when the next meeting will be.
- Have family council information (i.e. brochure, welcome letter) as part of the admissions package
- Establish a family council bulletin board
 - include information such as your mission statement, role of the family council, notice of meetings and contact information
 - make sure this includes an open invitation to all families and friends of residents
- Have family council meetings included in the monthly calendar of the facility
- Conduct a Family Council interest survey (a sample survey is available at www.acrbc.ca Family Council Handbook Appendix 1)
- Have a 'Welcome Meeting' for new families once or twice a year where they can meet family council members and the facility leadership team
- Enlist help from staff in promoting family council. Staff could:
 - during orientation ask if the family would provide a contact number and/or email address so that a representative from family council could contact them
 - send a letter out to new families, from the family council, 3 months after admission, including the mission statement and information on the role of family council (brochure)
 - ask the family during orientation if they would commit to volunteering a set number of hours (i.e. 8 hours a year) which would include participating in family council
 - recruit families during yearly care conference

Maintaining Membership Numbers

- Make sure meetings have structure
 - have an agenda and stick to it

- a strong chair is needed to keep things moving
- Ensure confidentiality – family members need to feel safe
- Council must be run by and for families
 - staff liaison should keep council updated on what's happening at the facility
 - the council should inform the staff liaison of any issues they want addressed
- Enlist help from management/staff to encourage families to get involved

Maintaining Membership Numbers cont'd

- Schedule meetings to accommodate the majority
 - survey families for best day/time
 - consider telephone conferencing
- Create a family council website with information on topics discussed inviting feedback
- Provide members with a list of the leadership team with their roles and responsibilities
- Make sure minutes of meetings are available to all family members – post on bulletin board, available at reception, email
- Family and friends of residents who have passed on may be invited to remain as members
- Invite speakers to keep people interested
- Invite ACR to help refocus the council if there have been lots of changes
- Plan an appreciation meeting for family members
- Huge issues bring people out
 - be prepared
 - gather information

TOPIC: Conducting Effective Meetings

- Keep family council autonomous, for and by families
 - make minutes available to all family members
- Prepare an agenda with times for each item and make sure to adjourn on time
 - solicit ideas for agenda items e.g. speakers, education
 - agenda should capture items from previous minutes
 - keep track of action items – who, what, timeframe
 - seek information required from staff in preparation for meeting
- Invite attendees to introduce themselves
 - use name tags
- Stress the need for confidentiality
 - no names or specifics in minutes
 - establish guidelines to help members feel safe expressing ideas and concerns
- Open meeting with positive statements, what's going well
- Encourage positive wording of questions
- Allow each person a reasonable time to speak
 - thank everyone for their input
- A strong chair is needed to move meeting along and keep to agenda
- Keep information on hand regarding Frequently Asked Questions and past initiatives and activities of the council
 - for new families joining the council

- Keep the focus on the mission and purpose of the family council
 - develop Terms of Reference
- Advise a family member to go directly to facility staff when a concern is specific to that one resident
 - create a client response form for use by family members to address a concern
 - provide a list of the leadership team with their roles and responsibilities so families will know who to go to with their concern
 - provide information on processing care issue

Conducting Effective Meetings cont'd

- Issues affecting more than one resident (global issues) should be referred to the staff liaison or director
 - brainstorm for problem solving solutions
 - compile factual information, timeframe
 - invite facility staff to address council on the specific issue
 - emphasize teamwork
- Keep meetings positive
 - celebrate successes
 - look for opportunities for positive feedback to staff/management
- Serve refreshments
 - time to meet and greet
 - consider a yearly meet and greet function for families or families and staff

TOPIC: *Building a Collaborative Relationship With Management*

- Clarify the role and purpose of the family council
- Recognize that we need to help each other
 - cultivate trust and respect
 - keep language positive, inclusive and collaborative
- Focus on common interest in quality care and quality of life of the residents
- Collaborate on problem solving
 - maintain constructive criticism
 - offer suggestions
 - focus on problem resolution not blaming or finger pointing
- Foster positive communication in both directions
- Gather background information and facts when raising issues with management
- Encourage management to keep families informed of important changes in policies, practices and personnel
 - seek clarity on management structure – who is responsible for what and how to contact them (phone, email, fax)
- Encourage consultation with family council on policies and practices
 - ask for family representation on facility committees
- Make sure there is a mechanism in place whereby council can address issues and ideas to management/board
- Give facility staff/management reasonable time to resolve problems
 - request interim feedback on progress
- Ensure family involvement in Care Conference
 - advance notice

- opportunity for families to identify matters they wish to discuss
- Communicate - Communicate - Communicate

***TOPIC: How Can Family Councils Support Family Members and Friends
(Residents) In Care***

- Listen to the residents' concerns
 - if there is a resident council ask to see their minutes
- Direct concerns to the appropriate person
- Share your experiences
 - shared concerns can be addressed through the family council for a stronger voice
- Provide a voice for all residents
 - advocate for residents without any family or friends to speak for them
- Volunteer
 - find out if staff could use help with leisure programs and pitch in
- Bring pets to visit
- Support residents without family or resources
 - visiting
 - running errands
 - contacting community services e.g. pastoral