

Resident Councils in Nursing Facilities



What is a Resident Council?

A Resident Council is an independent, organized group of residents living in a nursing home who meet on a regular basis to:

- Create change
- Address quality of life
- Address quality of care, dignity and respect

What is a Resident Council?

- Plan resident activities
- Participate in legislation
- Discuss other matters that are brought before council members

What are the Goals of a Resident Council?

It is the goal of the resident council to act in an advisory capacity to the Administrator in matters related to policy and operational decisions affecting resident care and life in the facility.

What are the Goals of a Resident Council?

A resident council should work to promote and enhance the quality of life for all residents.

The Administrator shall give due and proper consideration to such input.

Should Staff attend Resident Councils?

Each resident council should operate independently with no staff intervention. Council members should actively participate in development of choices regarding activities, food, living arrangements, personal care and other aspects of resident life.

Should Staff attend Resident Councils?

Every nursing home resident council is different, due to differences in both the residents who participate and the level of support and responsiveness from the facility. The resident council movement has grown into a vital part in promoting the health, safety, and welfare of residents in nursing homes.

Benefits of the Resident Council

As a group, the council can work to bring about positive changes that will promote the quality of life and quality of care for all residents.

- Offers ongoing support with strength drawn from shared experiences.

Benefits of the Resident Council

- Provides an opportunity to discuss concerns in a safe setting.
- Builds communication with staff and creates a team environment.
- Advances the quality of care for the benefit of all residents through teamwork.

Benefits of the Resident Council

- Supports residents who do not have locally involved families or friends.
- Promotes that all residents are treated in a dignified manner and all issues are taken seriously.
- Helps residents gain access to information on a specific topic.

How to Start a Resident Council

- If you are interested in becoming a member of a resident council, talk to someone in administration to determine if the nursing home has a council. If the nursing home has a council, find out when the next meeting is and plan to attend. If the home does not have a council, find other residents who are interested and start one.

How to Start a Resident Council

- Determine a date for your first meeting.
- Ask your council advisor for assistance in delivering fliers and invitations to all residents.
- Ask the administration to announce your meetings in the facility newsletter or in the activity calendar.

How to Start a Resident Council

- The staff must provide you with a private meeting place.
- The staff should only attend the meeting at the request of the council members.
- Contact the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman to help you get started.
- Your Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman can get you information on Resident Rights and State and Federal Rules.

The Resident Council Advisor

The Administrator of the nursing home should either act as an advisor to the resident council or appoint another staff member to perform that role.

The Resident Council Advisor

The Advisor should:

- Help recruit members.
- Explain the policies and procedures of the nursing home.
- Inform members of changes/decisions in the nursing home.

The Resident Council Advisor

The Advisor should:

- Create awareness and appreciation of the council and its importance throughout the facility.
- Help with administrative tasks.
- Assist with problem-solving for concerns.

What the Advisor Should Not Do:

- Plan or lead the meeting.
- Attend the meeting unless invited.
- Choose activities for the council.
- Make decisions for the council.
- Speak on behalf of the council without their approval or endorsement.

Purpose of the Resident Council

Problem Solving

- Address problems brought to the attention of the council by a resident, family or visitor.

Purpose of the Resident Council

Problem Solving Process:

- Clearly identify the concern.
- Identify what the complainant sees as resolution.
- Develop ideas for resolution.

Purpose of the Resident Council

- Call the Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman for advice, information or assistance.
- Talk with the council advisor.
- Follow up to assess the effectiveness of the resolution.

Resident Council Project Ideas

- Plan activities or events.
- Form a welcome committee for new residents.
- Plan a support group for a specific illness or cause.

Resident Council Project Ideas

- Organize a resource library.
- Identify activities requested by residents.
- Plan salutes to Veterans.
- Plan special meals.

Resident Council Project Ideas

- Invite speakers to the meeting for educational purposes.
- Invite a facility staff members to the meeting to explain staff roles and jobs or to answer questions.

Resident Council Project Ideas

- Invite speakers from the community such as legislators, community leaders or professionals in the fields related to nursing home care.

Resident Council Topics

- Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
- Resident Rights
- Nursing Home Regulations
- The Care Plan process
- Legislative issues

Resident Council Topics

- Role of the Medical Director
- Hospice or Palliative Care
- Information on diseases common to the Elderly, such as, Alzheimer's Disease
- Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention

Resident Council Topics

- Restraint use in Nursing Homes
- Medication
- Nutrition and Hydration
- The Nursing Home Survey Process

Federal Rules Resident and Family Councils

- F243

§483.15(c) Participation in Resident and Family Groups

(1) A resident has the right to organize and participate in resident groups in the facility;

(2) A resident's family has the right to meet in the facility with the families of other residents in the facility;

Federal Rules Resident and Family Councils

(3) The facility must provide a resident or family group, if one exists, with private space;

(4) Staff or visitors may attend meetings at the group's invitation;

(5) The facility must provide a designated staff person responsible for providing assistance and responding to written requests that result from group meetings;

See Interpretive Guidance for §483.15(c) at tag F244

Federal Rules Resident and Family Councils

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§483.15(c)(6) When a resident or family group exists, the facility must listen to the views and act upon the grievances and recommendations of residents and families concerning proposed policy and operational decisions affecting resident care and life in the facility.

Interpretive Guidelines §483.15(c)

Federal Rules Resident and Family Councils

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This requirement does not require that residents' organize a residents or family group. However, whenever residents or their families wish to organize, facilities must allow them to do so without interference. The facility must provide the group with space, privacy for meetings, and staff support. Normally, the designated staff person responsible for assistance and liaison between the group and the facility's administration and any other staff members attend the meeting only if requested.

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“A resident’s or family group” is defined as a group that meets regularly to:

- Discuss and offer suggestions about facility policies and procedures affecting residents’ care, treatment, and quality of life;

Federal Rules Resident and Family Councils

- F244

“A resident’s or family group” is defined as a group that meets regularly to:

- Support each other;
- Plan resident and family activities;
- Participate in educational activities; or
- For any other purpose

Federal Rules Resident and Family Councils

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The facility is required to listen to resident and family group recommendations and grievances. Acting upon these issues does not mean that the facility must accede to all group recommendations, but the facility must seriously consider the group's recommendations and must attempt to accommodate those recommendations, to the extent practicable, in developing and changing facility policies affecting resident care and life in the facility. The facility should communicate its decisions to the resident and/or family group.

Federal Rules Resident and Family Councils

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Procedures §483.15(c)

If no organized group exists, determine if residents have attempted to form one and have been unsuccessful, and, if so, why.

Final Thoughts

- Remember that a Resident Council should be run by the residents.
- Members must know that they direct the operation of the Resident Council.

Final Thoughts

- Resident Councils are successful when there is a supportive Council Advisor.
- Resident Council members can learn, work on projects and solve problems together.



Office of the State Long-Term Care
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Established within the Iowa Department on Aging
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