

# ***FAMILY MATTERS***

**A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHICAGO FAMILY COUNCIL PROJECT: ILLINOIS CITIZENS FOR BETTER CARE**

## **FAMILY COUNCIL TIPS & TOOLS**

### ***Topic #5 – How to Make a Small Council an Effective Council***

In Illinois, the typical family council meeting has 3-6 participants. Especially at larger facilities, the lack of family participation can be frustrating for the council. It is not always possible for the family council membership to reflect 10% of the resident census, and the council does not need to wait for increased membership before taking action on facility-wide concerns or inviting guest speakers. Keep the focus on what you *can* do and any positive steps that might attract others. Don't bemoan that there are only a few participants. Here are some tips to help your family council be more effective:

- Use the internet to keep members updated. Most people have a relative or neighbor's email address that they will share with you. Email people meeting reminders and minutes. This is especially helpful for relatives who live out of town.
- Focus your objectives. Come up with 3-5 things that you would like to see improved, and 3-5 things that you are happy about. Discuss them with the administration, and focus on these aspects for the year. Don't worry about the formalities of elections, etc. Have a recognized leader/facilitator for each meeting, and focus on what the group is going to accomplish together.
- Stay connected to the Illinois Family Council Listserv, an email forum that provides policy updates and educational opportunities to share with your family council. It can also be used to request information on topics that your council is interested in.
- Consider involving members of the resident council and staff. A resident council can advertise your meetings, while a trusted staff member can provide support.
- Formulate strategies for getting input from other residents/family members. i.e.: make a "communication form" that people can leave in the family council mailbox if they want you to know about an issue, but can't come to the meeting.
- Focus on common issues that affect many residents. Administrators may dismiss issues raised by the family council unless they are truly common issues.
- Be specific. In communicating with the administrator, be prepared to explain how the issue is a common, not individual one (give examples, share survey results, etc.)
- Schedule high-profile events like inviting a legislator to visit the facility.

**For more tips and information on effective Family Councils, visit:**

[http://www.nccnhr.org/public/50\\_152\\_496.cfm](http://www.nccnhr.org/public/50_152_496.cfm).

## **NATIONAL UPDATE**

*"Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes"*

Support improved quality of care and quality of life for residents nationwide - join a broad-based coalition of long-term care providers, caregivers, medical and quality improvement experts, government agencies, and consumer advocates. As a consumer, commit to excellence in nursing homes: **Sign up for the National Campaign for Quality**. Go to [www.nhqualitycampaign.org](http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org) or email: [info@nhqualitycampaign.org](mailto:info@nhqualitycampaign.org).

## IL FAMILY COUNCIL COALITION

- The Illinois Family Council Coalition (ILFCC) is a group of family council members from throughout IL that meet quarterly to (1) influence long-term care public policy; (2) educate family councils on state nursing home issues; and (3) promote communication among Illinois family council members. ILFCC's next meeting: April 18, 2007, 1-3pm, in Springfield. Teleconferencing available. **We need more representatives!**
- Over 40 Illinois family council members participated in the 1/18 conference call, "How Family Members Can Advocate on Staffing Issues." This call, hoped to be part of a series of calls to better inform and empower family members, featured Robyn Grant, Long-Term Policy Director and NCCNHR Board member, who briefly reviewed state and federal staffing guidelines. Family members shared success stories and brainstormed concrete ways for family councils to address staffing standards at their loved one's home. To view the minutes of this meeting, visit [www.nccnhr.org](http://www.nccnhr.org).

## ICBC ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

In September, the Department of Public Health proposed a family council rule which, if adopted, will require nursing homes to distribute family council materials to all current and prospective

family members. This rule would reduce the obstacles to recruiting family council members. If not adopted in one year, the rule will die.

**Support the rule becoming law:** ask your state senators and representatives to urge Public Health to proceed with adopting the rule. **Call ICBC for tips on this!**

## IL FAMILY COUNCIL SUCCESSES - YEAR IN REVIEW

**Over the past year, the following has been accomplished:**

- Creation of 8 new Family Councils in Chicago;
- Formation of the ILFCC;
- Creation of the ICBC website: [www.illinoiscares.org](http://www.illinoiscares.org);
- Creation of the Illinois Family Council listserv, designed to connect Illinois family Council members and to provide updates on nursing home policy and educational opportunities; and
- A proposed Family Council Rule regarding provision of family council information to family members
- Research conducted by Illinois Citizens for Better Care has identified 46 family councils throughout the state. In addition, there are 9 family groups that meet regularly to discuss nursing home issues, but are led by staff members. **For a complete list of family councils**, please visit [www.illinoiscares.org](http://www.illinoiscares.org).

**For more information**, contact Alicia Loucks: [aliciaicbc@core.com](mailto:aliciaicbc@core.com), or 312.663.5120 or **Join the IL Family Council listserv** at: [Illinois-Family-Councils@googlegroups.com](mailto:Illinois-Family-Councils@googlegroups.com).

## RESOURCES

- Borun Center: <http://www.borun.medsch.ucla.edu/default.htm>
- Illinois Citizens for Better Care: <http://www.illinoiscares.org/>
- National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform: Consumer Center: [www.nccnhr.org](http://www.nccnhr.org)
- National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care Information: [www.longtermcare.gov](http://www.longtermcare.gov)
- National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center: <http://www.ltombudsman.org/>
- Videos on Aging: <http://www.terranova.org/>
- Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Long-term Care Facility Cost Reports: <http://www.hfs.illinois.gov/costreports/>

*The Chicago Family Council Project is a project of Illinois Citizens for Better Care ([www.illinoiscares.org](http://www.illinoiscares.org)), and the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform ([www.nccnhr.org](http://www.nccnhr.org)). For more information contact ICBC, 220 South State Street, Suite 1928, Chicago, IL 60604, tel. 312-663-5120, or email [icbc@core.com](mailto:icbc@core.com)*