

Promoting Participation in Family Councils

One challenge faced by many family councils in nursing homes is recruiting and maintaining members. Frequent changes in residents and, therefore, family members, can cause levels of participation to fluctuate and have an impact on the stability and continuity of a family council. Below are suggestions for family councils on how to contact families of new residents and create strategies for ongoing recruitment.

Points to Remember about Promoting Family Council Participation

- Do not get discouraged. Even a small group can be effective. Many family councils have active participation by only about 10% of the families of the residents in the facility.
- Efforts to notify families and friends concerning family council meetings, events, and accomplishments must be ongoing due to frequent changes in residents/families.

Supporting New Families

- Participate in new family orientations at the facility to provide information about family council activities.
- Visit a new resident and their family members shortly after their arrival to share information about the council.
- Sponsor social events to meet new families and residents.

Personal Contacts

- Personal contact (i.e. personal invitations, introductions, etc.) is essential for promoting participation in family councils. Each participant should make a point of inviting other family members to participate between meetings.
- Consider having family members volunteer to be "greeters" in the lobby of the nursing home to introduce themselves and to tell families about the benefits of a family council.

Building a Network

- Provide a sign-in sheet at meetings for names, phone numbers, and addresses of families who attend in order to make future contacts and share reminders of meetings.

- Appoint or elect family members to act as floor/unit representatives to recruit new members and advertise meetings.
- Include in the admissions packets a permission slip to allow the release of the new families' phone numbers to the council.
- Provide ongoing support to one another during and between council meetings.

Develop Written Materials

- Produce brochures, fliers, and newsletters so that families have visual reminders.
- Ask the nursing home to put information about the family council in their newsletter to families.
- Place a bulletin board in the lobby to share the mission statement and successes of the family council, information about meetings and other items of interest to family members.

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings