

Resident and Family Councils Checklist

Utilize this checklist when creating or renewing a resident and family council. This checklist helps staff understand what is needed to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all residents and their families. It can determine if the council can efficiently and effectively present suggestions that move to action. The checklist includes suggested action items so the organization may prepare to establish new councils or refresh an existing council.

Definition of Resident and Family Councils

A resident or family council is a group of people with a common interest and purpose to inform the organization's policy and procedures that provide long-term care support services and housing. The council can be made up by just residents, residents and supportive staff, residents and family members, family members or a mix of residents and family. Family is defined as a supportive advocate that may or may not be related by blood, adoption or marriage. The council members may request help or meet without administrative staff to identify needs or requests that become action. Resident and family voices are central to driving quality and an inclusive community. Supportive advocacy for the residents and additional council support can be found by contacting your state Ombudsman. Find your representatives: [National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center](#).

Foundation to Establish or Resume Resident and Family Councils

- Make Leadership aware of the council.
- Leadership sponsors the council.
- Review the national [Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services \(CLAS\)](#) standards to ensure the council is inclusive and supportive of each resident and staff of the organization. Leadership, staff assigned to support the council and any volunteers that support council should also review the [national CLAS standards](#).
- Establish a Charter (bylaws are not required but are welcomed). The [Resident Council Tool Kit for Resident Council Members](#) from the Illinois Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program can help.
- Train staff and volunteers to support meeting needs by using the [national CLAS standards](#) to support facilitating discussions to motivate and encourage council participants to provide input and bring common ground when there are differences of opinion.
 - Additional resource: page 10 of “[Turning Complaints into Compliments](#)” by the National Center for Assisted Living.
- Designate a meeting room that meets privacy, accessibility, comfort, capacity and safety needs.
- Identify a business staff support person to assist with things like printing materials, creating and distributing notices and meeting minutes, etc. This can also be a volunteer or staff member.
- Develop a procedure for staff to assist residents to and at meetings.
- With staff and Leadership, and resident and family input, find possible days and times of the week to hold council meetings. Present the options to residents and families. Ensure these dates and times meets everyone’s needs.
- Inform all staff of the definition of a resident and family council. Explain their roles and the council’s privacy policy.

Meeting Preparation for Resident and Family Councils

- Develop invitations and notice templates. Minnesota's Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care has created [sample invitations and notices](#) that you can use.
- Pick a template for meeting agendas. Minnesota's Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care has created [agenda templates](#) that you can use.
- Meet individually with residents and or families to determine areas of interest and develop an understanding of their value systems and cultures.
- Create a schedule of topics by reviewing those shared in this training. By doing this you will draw people into the council, offer educational opportunities and create an environment for resident-centered quality improvement. Collect stories and ideas from residents, families, advocates, staff and the community.
- Post announcement of the new or renewed council for residents, families and staff. To help promote the announcement, you may want to:
 - Insert in bills and other mailings.
 - Include in staff paychecks and other mailings.
 - Add to the facility's newsletter.
 - Place readable and well-positioned posters around the building.
 - Announce at activities and events.
 - Add the meetings to the facility's activities calendar.
 - Hand out flyers to each resident.

Launch Resident and Family Council

- Ensure all residents receive the support needed to access meetings on time. Assist residents with scheduling other appointments if they want to attend meetings (i.e., facility, therapy or hair appointments, to be postponed if desired by the resident).
- At the first or renewed meeting, establish an understanding of the group's desire to be a resident, family or a combined council.
- Establish group rules.
- Create a policy and procedure to describe how feedback will be brought to Leadership and how Leadership will communicate the actions taken to the council.
- Provide agendas and notetaking materials to all council members.
- Assign someone to take meeting minutes, this could be a resident, a council approved staff person or a volunteer. Review the meeting minutes with the council to ensure accuracy before making them public.



Sustaining and Getting Feedback from Resident and Family Councils

- Provide action items and recommendations to Leadership to review and consider. Ask Leadership to provide feedback by the next meeting to give an update to the council members.
- Mitigate any challenges as they present to maintain common council goals and respect for all members of the council.
- Identify measures of improvement using feedback from the council.
- Establish community connections to support the council. This could include local and county government, libraries and community centers. The Minnesota Board on Aging has created a [facilitator's guide](#) with sample ideas for working with the community.
- Get feedback at regular intervals, to be determined by the council, to make improvements as needed.
- Post meeting minutes in an accessible location to all. Consider reading the minutes at an activity. Provide a copy of the minutes to all that request them.

Please continue to follow this series for ongoing updates regarding meeting topics, additional resources and to support Resident and Family Councils.