

Toolkit

Alberta Resident and Family Councils Act

Developed by: Alberta Health

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Printed versions are not available.

The sample documents included in the Alberta Resident and Family Councils Act Toolkit are available for download at <https://alberta.ca/resident-family-councils.aspx>.

If you have suggestions for content to include in the toolkit, please email us at continuingcare@gov.ab.ca

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THE ALBERTA RESIDENT AND FAMILY COUNCILS ACT TOOLKIT

The [Resident and Family Councils Act](#) ensures that every person living in a licensed supportive living or long-term care setting serving four or more residents in Alberta, along with their family, has the opportunity to form a resident and family council. A resident and family council can help make positive changes to the quality of life of residents. The goal of this toolkit is to help residents and families set up and maintain councils. It also contains tools and ideas that may be useful for places with existing councils.

This toolkit is based on a toolkit developed by Covenant Health: [The Alberta Continuing Care Resident and Family Council Toolkit](#). Nine long-term care facilities piloted a version of this toolkit and brought forward suggestions to make it better.

Part One of the toolkit explains the Resident and Family Councils Act, reviews the purpose of councils, and describes their benefits.

Part Two provides information and samples of supporting documents to help create and maintain a council. These documents can be downloaded for use from <https://alberta.ca/resident-family-councils.aspx>.

Part 1: An Introduction to resident and family councils

What is the *Resident and Family Councils Act*?

In late 2017, the Government of Alberta passed the [Resident and Family Councils Act](#). The legislation creates rules to support **residents** and their **families** to have councils in licensed supportive living settings (such as some group homes, supportive living sites, seniors lodges, and designated supportive living) and long-term facilities (which include auxiliary hospitals and nursing homes). The toolkit calls the various places the *Resident and Family Councils Act* applies to a resident's **home**.

The *Resident and Family Councils Act* does not require residents or their families to have a council if they do not want one. Nevertheless, it does set rules to help people form a council if they wish and requires an **operator** to help them do so. The rules require **operators** to help residents form a council by sharing information and providing space for meetings. If residents and families at a home do not want a council, the legislation still requires operators to let residents know, at least two times per year, that they can have a council if they want one.

Where does the *Resident and Family Councils Act* apply?

The new rules apply to many different places, including nursing homes, seniors' lodges and some types of group homes serving four or more residents. These kinds of homes are often referred to as licensed supportive living or long-term care in Alberta. Altogether, these residences are often called continuing care settings.

Under the [Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act](#), a residence is called licensed

Who is a resident?

Under the *Resident and Family Councils Act*, a resident is a person who lives in a licensed supportive living or long-term care setting.

Who is family?

Family refers to anyone who is important to the resident, such as relatives, friends, guardians, and caregivers.

Who is an operator?

Many different groups or companies are responsible for running licensed supportive living and long-term care settings in Alberta. In some settings, they are called operators, while in others they are called service providers. Often a manager represents the service providers in the home and is responsible for overseeing day-to-day activities in the home. In spite of this difference in language, the *Resident and Family Councils Act* and toolkit calls these different groups operators.

supportive living when it is the home of four or more people unrelated to the operator. The operator arranges for services related to the safety of the people who live there and provides either housekeeping services, or at least one meal per day. Licensed supportive living can include group homes, lodges, supportive living and designated supportive living.

Long-term care is the name commonly used in Alberta to describe residences where people receive care for more complex health needs as well as the personal supports provided in licensed supportive living. Sometimes these places are called nursing homes or auxiliary hospitals. These settings are defined under the [Nursing Homes Act](#) and the [Hospitals Act](#).

What is a resident and family council?

A resident and family council is a group of people who meet and work together to improve residents' lives. Moving to a new home can be a major change; it involves the loss of what is familiar and comfortable for residents, families, friends and other caregivers. Being part of a council is a way for residents to make living in their home a happier and more successful experience and for families/friends to feel involved in the lives of their loved ones.

What is the purpose of a council?

Councils can help residents and family members raise concerns and make suggestions. They are places where voices can be heard by operators. Councils can also shape life within a home by encouraging socialization and interaction among residents, family members, and the home's staff. While councils can promote communication about policy and be a place to provide feedback, their purpose is not to create operator-level policy.

What are the benefits of a council?

Councils give residents and their families opportunities to:

- Work together, support one another and share experiences;
- Look for solutions to common concerns;
- Communicate concerns to the home's staff, follow up on solutions,
- Have a voice in decisions about their home, and hear staff and operator's/manager's views;
- Generate ideas to improve quality of life and build community; and
- Increase council members' understanding and awareness of what's possible through guest presentations and information sharing.

Councils can also help operators and staff members perform better in their roles. Through a council, they can learn about the resident's point of view and ask questions about how best to support residents and families.

Below are some examples of activities that a council can do to improve residents' lives:

- Create ways to welcome and support new residents and their families in the home;
- Help families understand the home's environment;
- Raise funds for activities to help grant residents' wishes;
- Work with staff to develop a vegetable/flower garden or inside/outside sitting area;
- Plan and support special events (e.g. dances, special dinners, seasonal activities); and
- Advocate for home improvements, such as building a wheelchair ramp or having a security review by local police or corporate security.

Part 2: Establishing and maintaining an effective resident and family council

Who can set up a council?

Any individual resident, family member or group of residents and/or family members can set up a council. Remember that it is a requirement of the *Resident and Family Councils Act* for the operator to help residents and families set up and run a council if they want one. Another requirement is that operators identify a facility representative to support council activities and help resolve issues. A **facility representative** is any person that is identified by the operator to support the council in a variety of ways by attending meetings, acting as a leader at meetings if needed, providing secretarial support, reviewing and distributing meeting minutes, helping to advertise upcoming meetings, and ensuring issues are appropriately followed-up and reported on.

Step one: Recruit council members or familiarize new members

There are many ways residents and family members can be informed about the purpose, benefits, and activities of a council. The tools and strategies below can be used to develop a council in a home that does not have one or to inform new residents and families about a council that already exists.

Who is a facility representative?

A person identified by the operator of a home that supports council activities.

- **Create a poster or brochure**—Give new and existing residents and families a poster or brochure (see [Poster to set up a council in a home](#) and [Council information poster](#)). Ask staff for help posting and sharing this information (e.g. posting it on a website, bulletin board, and/or sending it on a billing notice to family members, etc.).
- **Connect with residents and families during day-to-day activities**—Bring up the idea of a council at lunch or during a recreational activity to gauge interest and begin planning.
- **Engage the home's staff**—Ask staff for ideas about existing forms of communication (e.g., news updates via email) that can be used.

Step two: Figure out who will lead the council and develop an organizational structure

The [*Resident and Family Councils Act*](#) allows each council to figure out who will lead the council, how membership will be identified, and what organizational structure it will use. Various factors can shape what form a council takes. These include the type of setting, residents' needs, the level of involvement from staff and volunteers, mix of residents and family members, and the size of the home.

Ideally, residents and family members lead the council, but you may want to draw on the help of the facility representative when you first set up your council. Later residents and/or family can take over the responsibility to lead the council. An effective council may include a mix of residents, family members, and staff members.

A "resident and family council may determine its own governance structure and procedures" (*RFCA* Section 3(4)).

When setting up a council, an issue to consider is what organizational structure will work best to help organize meetings and run other council activities. Councils are free to decide what governance structure and process works best for them. The 'executive' and 'leadership team' are two options. Councils may also use neither of these models and instead have a more informal council that meets regularly over meals or some other type of event where residents and families can interact.

Elections are a way get people to fill positions on a council, especially when there is a lot of interest. In the beginning positions may be filled more informally without elections, but over time as a council is more established, it is considered best practice to hold elections once a year to give other people the opportunity participate in leadership and council positions.

Typically, an election begins with people indicating interest in a specific position. In situations where a council does not exist, a process will need to be developed to determine the membership of the council. One option is for a person to become a "nominee" by indicating their interest in a position by completing and submitting a form to a small group (see [Nominee application form](#)). The purpose of the small group is to review the nominee application forms, develop a process for how nominees can be elected, and to organize the first election. The small group could be made up of mix of residents, family, and staff members who are

interested in helping to set up a resident and family council. After the nominees are chosen, another issue that the group might consider is who can vote in the election and what processes will be put in place to help residents to vote if they can't vote themselves.

Will you use the executive structure?

This structure requires the election of people into formal positions (for e.g. chair, vice chair, and secretary) that have defined and assigned responsibilities (see [Executive structure - position descriptions](#)).

Benefits include:

- Clearly defined roles—for some people, it is more comfortable to know exactly what their responsibility is.
- Familiarity—people may recognize the formal structure from other contexts such as participating on boards.

Disadvantages include:

- It can be intimidating for people who don't have a lot of experience in groups, which use formal processes, or roles, so fewer people may be willing to nominate themselves for the positions.

Will you use the leadership team structure?

This structure is less formal but has a group (the leadership team) that leads and shares responsibilities (see [Leadership team – description of duties](#)). A leadership team usually consists of 3 to 6 members, but this can vary depending on the situation. Council members can take turns leading meetings and sharing the work. This structure may work better in homes with fewer residents.

Benefits include:

- Shared responsibilities—work does not fall on any one person.
- Collaboration and learning—people feel inspired by working together.
- Playing on the strengths of the team—each person can do what they enjoy most and are most skilled at.

- Better representation—this structure tends to have a larger, more diverse group of council members.
- Easier to recruit participants—because the structure is more fluid and less formal, it is easier to encourage people to step in. Participants may also find joining less intimidating.

Disadvantages include:

- It takes more time to rebuild after the leadership team changes.

What is a Terms of Reference?

As your council grows and matures, you may want to make your structure more formalized with a set of governing principles that are written down. This document is called a Terms of Reference and often describes in writing:

- How the council operates;
- Roles of council members or executives;
- How often the council meets;
- Meeting style;
- How much the home's manager or facility representative is involved; and
- How decisions are made.

The benefit of having a set of governing principles is that each council member knows their duties and responsibilities, which can make council activities and meetings run more smoothly. The document can also be used to help new council members familiarize themselves with the intent of the council and their roles as the membership changes over time. It is considered best practice to review this document regularly to make sure that the governing principles still fit with the needs of the home and the council. In addition, this document may not be well suited in smaller homes or with councils that have a more informal organizational style.

Step three: Advertise, prepare for and plan meetings

The following tools can help you to advertise meetings:

- [Meeting notice](#)
- [Council newsletter](#)—A newsletter can also let you highlight all the good work your council does.

To get as many interested people as possible, consider ways to involve residents and family members who may have difficulty attending a meeting. Some ideas include:

- Holding teleconference or web-conference meetings (such as Skype for Business).
- Using different meeting times, such as evenings or weekends.
- Choosing a time of day, week or month when family are already at the home.
- Tying a meeting to an event that gets large attendance such as a party or barbeque.

The following tools can help you to record attendance, organize meetings, and keep track of issues raised at meetings:

- [Attendance sheet](#)—Allows you to track changes in attendance over time.
- [Agenda](#)—Helps you to stay on topic and on keep meetings on time.
- [Minutes](#)—Note-taking in the form of 'minutes' is a way to keep track of topics and concerns raised at meetings and identifying items that require follow-up action.

An operator must "attend, or ensure a facility representative attends, all meetings of a resident and family council where invited to do so by the council" (RFCA Section 5(b)).

Step four: Hold effective and productive meetings

Should operators and staff attend council meetings?

Making sure your council is a welcoming environment will help to encourage participation and strengthen the council's ability to function. An issue to consider is whether the facility representative or other staff members should attend meetings because people may not feel comfortable speaking up. However, it may be useful for a facility representative and/or staff members to attend meetings so that they can listen to the concerns raised by residents and family members. One option is to consider setting time aside in each council meeting where the home's staff are asked to leave so that residents and families can more openly discuss issues. During this time, it is important to keep track of any issues that are raised so that they can be communicated to the facility representative.

An operator must "attend, or ensure a facility representative attends, all meetings of a resident and family council where invited to do so by the council" (*RFCA* Section 5(b)).

How do council representatives come to an agreement and make plans at meetings?

You may find that coming to an agreement is a typical council activity that is needed in order to plan activities and resolve issues. There are different models that councils can consider adopting.

One model is consensus based decision-making where input is gathered from each council member. A benefit of this model is that each council member's viewpoint is considered with an agreement being a compromise of these different points of view. A disadvantage is that it can take a long time to come to an agreement.

Another model is the majority rule system. In this model, each council member gets one vote among a list of two or more options. An agreement is based on which option gets the most votes. The benefits of this model include quick decision-making and how easy it is to understand how a decision was made. A disadvantage is that the viewpoints of some members will be excluded.

How do you encourage input from council members and handle difficult situations at meetings?

Not all residents or family members may feel comfortable speaking up in a council meeting. This could happen for many reasons. To encourage input from people at council meetings, consider:

- Brainstorming and prioritizing solutions using the [nominal group technique](#).
- Dividing members into small groups to talk about an issue before discussing it as a large group.
- Setting up an informal or small group to look at a specific issue.

In addition, situations will inevitably arise that are outside the council members' comfort zones or knowledge base. While these situations may be uncomfortable, they need to be dealt with right away or they can disrupt meetings and the council's effectiveness. For additional information, the [Handling common meeting problems and difficult behaviours](#) document suggests ways to resolve some of the difficult situations that you may encounter.

Step five: Issue resolution with an operator and documentation

How do you document, follow-up on issues and track council activities?

The *Resident and Family Councils Act* requires that the home's operator and/or manager respond to and document (in writing) items identified and raised by the council. As such, operators may wish to use forms and a formal tracking process to keep track of the issues and their related plans to resolve them.

Below are two forms that can be used to facilitate the follow-up process. The forms and tracking sheet can be modified to best suit your council's needs.

The first form, [Council feedback report](#), is completed by a council member, usually an executive or leadership team member, after each meeting to document items that require follow-up. Afterwards, the form is submitted to

A home's operator must document in writing any requests, concerns and proposed solutions expressed to the operator by a resident and family council and provide copies of the process to the council (RFCA Section 5 (c), (f) and (g)).

the facility representative or home's manager who then signs the form.

The second form, [Operator feedback report](#), is completed by the facility representative or home's manager after each meeting. The form documents activities to be improved and keeps track of information on unresolved items. Upon completion, the form is submitted to council members and discussed at future council meetings.

What happens if an issue is raised at a council meeting that you are unable to resolve with an operator or during council meetings?

It may occur that council is unable to come to an agreement with the home's operator about an issue. If this happens, a council member can call an Alberta Health complaints officer (1-888-357-9339). The role of a complaints officer is to listen to concerns from residents and families and to help find the best way to address them. The complaints officer will help the council decide how best to deal with the issue and provide support to them.

This may mean that a complaints officer will ask an inspector to visit the home to see if any requirements are not being followed. For example, inspectors from Alberta Health investigate complaints with provincial accommodation standards in certain types of homes. In a supportive living setting, if a requirement within the [Supportive Living Accommodation Standards](#) is not being followed, the inspector will work with the home's operator to make a plan to fix the issue and will visit the home again to make sure that the issue has been fixed.

Depending on the type of concern, the complaints officer may ask the council member to contact a more appropriate person or organization to discuss the issue. For example, this may include the Alberta Health Services' Patient Relations Department at 1-855-550-2555 or www.albertahealthservices.ca/patientfeedback.asp. This department is responsible for ensuring concerns about health care services are addressed and, if necessary, conveyed to senior management to make improvements as required.

There may also be situations where it is appropriate to direct concerns to other individuals or groups within the home. For instance, the home may have a food quality committee that reviews food and menu options

References and resources

Where can I get additional information?

This toolkit offers basic information to help you set up your own resident and family council.

Other Resident and Family Council guides and toolkits

- [Ontario Family Council's Program - Your Guide to Starting and Maintaining a Family Council](#)
 - Downloading is free once you enter your contact information.
- [Ontario Association of Residents' Councils - Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council](#)
- [Advocates for Care Reform - Family Council Handbook: Tools and Resources for Starting and Maintaining an Effective Family Council](#)
- [Missouri's Long Term Care Ombudsman - How to Organize and Direct an Effective Resident Council](#)
- [Children's Hospital of Wisconsin's - How to Jump Start a New Family Council or Breathe Life into a Struggling One: A Toolkit for Success](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health's - Guide for Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care Owned and Contracted Residential Care Facilities: Tools for Enhancing Resident and Family Involvement in Residential Care Facilities](#)

Covenant resources

- [Resident and Family Handbook](#)
- [Community Engagement Framework](#)
- [Inventory of Resources and Supports for Caregivers in Alberta](#)

Alberta Health Services resources

- [Alberta Health Services, Patient Engagement - A Guidebook for Engaging Patient and Family Advisors, January, 2016.](#)
- [Continuing Care Quality Management Framework](#)
- [A Resource Toolkit for Engaging Patient and Families at the Planning Table](#)

Storytelling resources: available on the AHS intranet site (insite). If the links below don't work, please request a copy from patient.engagement@ahs.ca.

- [A Storytelling Resource Kit for Patient and Family Advisors](#)
- [Patient and Family Storytelling in Healthcare: a Resource Kit for Health Care Providers](#)
- [Storytelling Guidebook: Integrated Quality Management](#)

Other resources

- [The Change Foundation: Long-Term Care Resident Councils and Family Councils Project](#) with information on the project, including two reports, on the website.
- [Institute for Patient- and Family-Centred Care: PFCC Best Practices](#)
- [Saint Elizabeth Person and Family Centered Care Institute](#)
- [The Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement Patient Engagement Resource Hub](#) has over 200 resources on engagement, priority setting and other useful topics.

ALBERTA RESIDENT AND FAMILY COUNCILS ACT TOOLKIT SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

To download documents, visit: <https://alberta.ca/resident-family-councils.aspx>

ATTENTION RESIDENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF [INSERT NAME OF HOME]

Resident and Family Councils Act

The *Resident and Family Council Act* was passed in 2017 and supports the establishment of resident and family councils in all long-term care and licensed supportive living facilities with four or more residents. Your facility operator/service provider is required to support the establishment of a council within your facility.

What the purpose of a council?

A council is intended to be a forum where residents and their family members can:

- Improve the quality of life for all residents;
- Work together on issues with their facility operator/service provider;
- Identify needs and concerns of residents; and
- Be involved in decision-making.

What does a council look like?

Residents and family members will be free to decide on the council structure and processes, including:

- Members' roles;
- Meeting format and frequency; and
- When and how facility representatives should be involved in council meetings.

Interested in starting a council?

If you are interested in starting a council at [insert facility name], please contact your facility representative. Your facility representative is [insert name] and can be contacted [insert contact information].

For more information about resident and family councils and how to form a council in your facility, visit <https://alberta.ca/resident-family-councils.aspx>.

ATTENTION RESIDENTS, FAMILY & STAFF: MEET YOUR RESIDENT AND FAMILY COUNCIL

Our council meets [insert frequency] to:

- improve the quality of life for all residents;
- work together on issues with the facility operator/service provider;
- identify needs and concerns of residents; and
- Involve you in decision-making.

Joining the council will:

- keep you updated on what is happening in the facility;
- allow you to have input into decisions and changes that affect residents;
- give you a chance to meet other residents and their family; and
- Give you the opportunity to use your experience, skills and talents to benefit all residents.

Interested in attending a meeting?

If you are interesting in joining, please contact [insert contact information for council member].

OR

Our next resident and family council meeting will be on [insert date and time] at [insert location]. We welcome all to join.

Please join us for a great discussion!

More information

The *Resident and Family Councils Act* was passed in 2017 and supports the establishment of resident and family councils in all long-term care and licensed supportive living facilities with four or more residents. For more information about resident and family councils, please visit <https://alberta.ca/resident-family-councils.aspx> .

RESIDENT AND FAMILY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Hello,

Before you get started, add a header that includes your home's logo and add the volume number and date into the footer. To do this, double click on the header or footer to open it and make the changes. You may need to double click twice to open them. Click on "Close Header and Footer" in the ribbon on the top to close it.

Feel free to change any section titles if you prefer to have other information in those areas.

This section is for the introduction to your newsletter. This box will expand as you type, but will take away room from the stories below.

Upcoming Events

Date
Event

Date
Event

Date
Event

Date
Event

Story or News Item #1 Title

This is where you will type your first story to share with residents and families. The most important stories should appear on the first page. Keep it short and sweet and stick to the main points.

Story or News Item #2 Title

This is where you will type your second story to share with residents and families. Keep it short and sweet and stick to the main points.

Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

[Insert picture here]

Add your text here.

More Important News

Story or News Item #3 Title

This is where you will type another story to share with residents and families. Keep it short and sweet and stick to the main points.

Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here.

Story or News Item #4 Title

This is where you will type another story to share with residents and families. Keep it short and sweet and stick to the main points.

Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here.

Story or News Item #5 Title

This is where you will type another story to share with residents and families. Keep it short and sweet and stick to the main points.

Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here.

Facility News

Event Name

Are there repairs, events or other things happening in the facility that you can quickly give a highlight or update? Put the information here. Or change the title of the section and put anything else you need highlighted here.

Event Name

Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here.

Event Name

Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here. Add your text here.

NOMINEE APPLICATION FORM

We are looking for people who wish to commit to a dynamic and productive resident and family council at [insert name of home]. Descriptions of the positions are included at the end of this form. (Note: the appropriate descriptions will need to be inserted depending on the organizational structure that is chosen). Please answer these questions and give it to [insert name and contact information] when you are done.

Your Contact Information:

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Application Information:

1. Which council executive position are you applying for?

2. Have you read the position description for this role?

Yes No

3. Why are you are interested in this position?

4. What makes you a good candidate for this position?

5. Please describe any experience you have that you think might be valuable to the council.

6. Please include below anything else you would like to tell us about yourself.

EXECUTIVE STRUCTURE: POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

CHAIR—is an elected resident, family member or staff member (i.e., facility representative). This person is often the vice-chair in the previous term. Duties include:

- Chairing meetings and overseeing the function of the council;
- Working closely with the home's operator and/or facility representative on council business;
- Reviewing and approving the drafted agenda;
- Asking staff members or guests to participate as needed;
- Arranging educational sessions;
- Reviewing and approving minutes for distribution;
- Ensuring the business of the meetings progresses; and
- Completing the Council Feedback Form and submitting it to the facility representative.

This position usually takes up to ten hours a month.

VICE CHAIR—is an elected resident, family member or staff member. This person may become chair in the next term. Duties include:

- Filling in for the chair when needed;
- Working closely with the chair to ensure the business of the meetings progresses; and
- Learning the role of the chair in preparation to take over the position in the next term.

This position usually takes about five hours a month.

PAST CHAIR—is the previous council chair. Duties include introducing the incoming chair to their new role, answering questions, and giving advice. This position usually takes about three hours a month until the new chair is comfortable in their position.

SECRETARY—is an elected resident, family member or staff member.

Duties include:

- Developing agendas;
- Recording minutes, including names of those attending, summarizing important information, recording action items and the person responsible for completing it;
- Submitting the agenda and minutes to the chair (or vice chair as applicable) and site representative to review and approve; and
- Advertising the upcoming meetings in collaboration with the site representative.

This position usually takes up to five hours a month.

LEADERSHIP TEAM: DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

As a member of the resident and family council's leadership team, you will work together to complete the following duties:

- Chairing meetings and overseeing the function of the council;
- Working closely with the home's operator and/or facility representative on all council business;
- Reviewing and approving the drafted agenda;
- Asking staff members or guests to participate as needed;
- Arranging educational sessions;
- Reviewing and approving minutes for distribution;
- Ensuring the business of the meetings progresses;
- Completing the Council Feedback Form and submitting it to the facility representative;
- Developing agendas;
- Recording minutes, including names of those attending, summarizing important information, recording action items and the person responsible for completing it;
- Reviewing and approving the agenda and minutes along with the facility representative; and
- Advertising the upcoming meetings along with the facility representative.

You can find more information on this model in a webinar from the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils: https://youtu.be/weG_zlt6hTo.

INVITATION TO A RESIDENT AND FAMILY COUNCIL MEETING

What: Resident and family council meeting

Who: All residents and family members

When: Date and time

Where: Location

Information about the meeting:

At this meeting, we will be discussing:

- Put in highlights from the agenda here
- And here
- And here

Please join us for a great discussion!

RESIDENT AND FAMILY COUNCIL ATTENDANCE SHEET

Date:

Location:

Name	Attendee Type	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Guest
	<input type="checkbox"/> Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Guest
	<input type="checkbox"/> Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Guest
	<input type="checkbox"/> Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Guest
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Guest

RESIDENT AND FAMILY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Date:

Location:

Agenda item		Lead	Time
1.	Welcome and introductions	Meeting leader name	X min
	A. Guest speakers (if applicable)		X min
2.	Review ground rules	Meeting leader name	X min
3.	Old business		
	A. Updates on action items from previous meeting		
	1.	Assigned individual name	X min
	B. Upcoming activities		
	1.	Assigned individual name	X min
4.	New business		X min
	A. Announcements		
	1.		
	2.	Assigned individual name	X min
	B. Round table of issues and concerns	All	X min
5.	Next meeting	Meeting leader name	X min

Ground Rules:

1. Speak openly. We value all contributions.
2. Respect confidentiality at meetings – any personal information is not discussed outside of meetings.
3. Focus on improving quality of life for all residents.
4. Focus on the future.
5. Try to present possible solutions when identifying an issue.
6. Assume the best in one another and trust each other.
7. Work towards progress and strive to improve.
8. Ask questions to understand.
9. Respect everyone's point of view and accept differences of opinion.
10. Be respectful in your communication.

MEETING MINUTES

Date:

Location:

Agenda Item		Type of Notes Required
1.	Welcome and introductions	None
	B. Guest speakers 1.	None
2.	Attendance	Document names of people that are present
3.	Old business	Summarize in brief outstanding items
	A. Updates on action items from previous meeting 1.	Summarize in brief updates on actions from previous meetings
	B. Upcoming activities 1.	Summarize in brief upcoming activities and required actions
4.	New business	Summarize in brief new business and actions required
	C. Announcements 1. 2.	
	D. Round table of issues and concerns 1.	
5.	Next meeting	Document the date the next meeting is scheduled for

HANDLING COMMON MEETING PROBLEMS & DIFFICULT BEHAVIOURS

This document addresses two common challenges that can affect meetings:

- People not participating—members not contributing in meetings.
- Difficult behavior—members being disruptive in meetings.

Below, we discuss each problem and offer solutions for making meeting time as effective as possible.

People not participating

Participating in meetings and groups may be a new experience and people may be:

- Uncertain about their role and rights.
- Nervous about speaking in public.
- Hesitant to share opinions others might not agree with.
- Afraid of being criticized or ridiculed.
- Worried that speaking up, complaining or disagreeing in public is impolite or improper.
- Reluctant to offend anyone.
- Afraid of the consequences for them or their family member.
- Worried they cannot voice their ideas or express themselves well verbally.
- Uncomfortable speaking English.

Encourage members who do not speak up during meetings

You may be able to encourage more participation.

- Review the meeting principles at the beginning of every meeting to reinforce that the council is a safe place to share opinions and ideas.
- Gently encouraging participation. Be careful not to force participation or single anyone out.

- Allow people to be present without participating. People will participate in the discussion when they are comfortable. Remember that everyone has a different comfort level speaking in a group.
- Structure the meeting in the agenda, but allow members to speak when they feel comfortable.
 - Consider not limiting discussion to only one time in the meeting unless it is disruptive or inappropriate.
- Keep active members in check so they cannot overwhelm new or more hesitant members.
 - Suggest that they meet with you (or the appropriate person for the topic) after the meeting if they have more things they would like to discuss.
 - Ask if anyone else has comments or questions on the topic of discussion.
- Establish smaller committees for projects and initiatives. This may be more comfortable for some members and is a good way to contribute.
- Have gentle, private conversations with quieter members to find out if they find the council valuable and if they have ideas on how they might like to participate. Be careful not to interrogate.
 - The chair or meeting leader may want to stay for a few minutes at the end of the meeting to allow quieter members to have a quick one-to-one discussion.

Reassure members who avoid disagreements or confrontations

It can help to:

- Emphasize that everyone can have an opinion and something to contribute.
- Reinforce that disagreements are common and should be seen as resolvable.

Recognize members may be afraid

If members have fears about something, you may be able to reassure them. Consider if:

- They fear that action, or not taking action, might negatively affect them or their family.
- There is an interim solution for their situation.

- Someone more appropriate can help with the issue (such as a social worker, the home manager, or a support organization).

Difficult behaviours in meetings

The effectiveness of a Resident and Family Council suffers when members disrupt meetings, ignore procedures, create disputes or dampen enthusiasm. Strong leadership will manage members like this. Review the meeting principles/ground rules before each meeting to remind members how they should act and encourage them to respect the rights of others.

Here are some kinds of disruptive behaviour you may encounter and ideas on how to manage it:

Members who use meeting time to complain

A resident and family council is a place to resolve issues and tackle projects to improve the quality of life for all residents. Sometimes members won't let issues go that the home has already done its best to address. Try to review the original issue and its resolution because:

- Some members may be unaware of what happened previously.
- New options may be available that weren't previously.
- The issue may have changed enough for the council to re-examine it.

Remember that not all members will be satisfied with the results, and some issues may not be resolvable (for example, those that impinge on union contracts, limitations of physical environment, standards or laws that cannot be changed).

'Nothing-will-work' members who are convinced nothing will change

Sometimes, past failures in other situations or in the council may have made people defeatist. Try to:

- Acknowledge past disappointments (not failures) and remind them the council is moving forward.
- Emphasize concrete successes.

Members who become angry or upset if others disagree with them

Some people know that others will agree with them just to avoid a scene. Try to:

- Limit airtime for these members and don't let them take over. In extreme circumstances, someone may need to speak with the person privately to let them know their behaviour is viewed as confrontational and causes others to hesitate to share opinions.
- Reinforce that all opinions are valuable and the council is strongest with a variety of ideas.

'Broken-record' members who keep raising the same topic

Some people try to get their way by wearing others down. Often they feel no one is hearing them.

- Reinforce that you have heard them by summarizing their view and asking if they agree.
- Emphasize that they have been heard, and then ask others for their viewpoint. If they interrupt, remind them that you would like to hear how others feel but appreciate their contribution.

When unproductive behaviour seems to dominate meetings

Consider if complaints have more to do with the individual than the process. In that case, they should be handled in a one-on-one setting. However, complaints can be a sign that something is not working and you may need to:

- Seek out advice and mentorship from previous council members or the facility representative/home's operator.
- Refocus the council or organizational structure or meeting format.
- Emphasize the meeting principles/ground rules before meetings begin.
- Invite a guest speaker. Giving residents and family members opportunities to learn and understand issues that affect them can open up new solutions.
- Take courses on conducting meetings or dealing with difficult situations. Many community colleges and public libraries offer related courses.

- Celebrate successes more. This can ease frustration and encourage cooperation.

How to turn negative energy into constructive action

To do this:

- Reframe the discussion by asking questions: what is the main issue? What do we want to achieve? What are our next steps?
- Highlight positive contributions and encourage the person to participate constructively.
- Find a project or committee that matches someone's interests and that could benefit from their energy.
- Reinforce the meeting principles/ground rules and the requirement for respectful behavior.
- Address disruptive behaviour early and be firm with disruptive members.
- Prevent the actions of a few from dominating the entire council.

COUNCIL FEEDBACK REPORT

The following concerns arose at the meeting on the following date
(_____).

Please fill out the [Operator feedback report](#) and identify the steps planned or taken towards resolution for each of the items listed below and any items outstanding from other meetings. Return the form to me by [insert date] and be prepared to present it at our next council meeting.

1. Description of concern:
2. Description of concern:
3. Description of concern:
4. Description of concern:
5. Description of concern:

Thank you for helping resolve our concerns.

Submitted by:

Council representative
name

Signature

Date

Received by:

Name of home
operator/manager
or facility representative

Signature

Date

OPERATOR FEEDBACK REPORT

Below is a list of responses to concerns from the meeting on the identified date.

Date of meeting: _____

1. Description of concern:

Action:

2. Description of concern:

Action:

3. Description of concern:

Action:

4. Description of concern:

Action:

Please let me know when you next need an update on any outstanding items.

Submitted by:

Name of home operator/manager
or facility representative

Signature

Date

Received by:

Council representative name

Signature

Date