

Under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, a Family Council may request the licensee of the long-term care home through its management team to appoint a Family Council assistant who is accepted by the Council to assist it. We suggest that this appointment be done in a cooperative collaboration between the Council and the home.

The appropriate role of the staff assistant is to assist or facilitate the work of the Council – to make things easier or to help. A staff assistant should make it easier for Family Council members to achieve their goals.

Council members must request staff help. Some Councils choose to meet without staff of the home present or invite staff only to certain meetings. For a Council to be truly self-determining, these options must be possible.

### **Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007**

Under the Act, a Family Council may request a home to appoint a Family Council assistant to assist the Council. The licensee (through its designate) shall then appoint a Family Council assistant who is acceptable to that Council to assist the Family Council.  
2007, c. 8, s. 61 (1).

The staff assistant takes direction from the Council, attending meetings and maintaining confidentiality as required by the Council.  
2007, c. 8, s. 61 (2).

### **Assistance that a Staff Assistant May Provide**

Any tasks the staff assistant carries out for or on behalf of the Council should be discussed with and agreed upon by the Family Council.

- Supporting the Family Council in carrying out its powers as per the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007.
- Helping to tell families of new residents about the Family Council and encouraging them to attend
- Advising families on changes within the home (e.g., dietary changes, new policies, new staff)
- Explaining the home's policies and procedures
- Making other staff aware of the Council and its importance
- Helping the Council communicate its questions and ideas to, and receive responses from, appropriate staff and administration
- Bolstering Council members' self-confidence and enthusiasm
- Seeing that members receive recognition for their efforts
- Helping members learn the skills needed to achieve their goals
- Training Council members to run effective meetings
- Facilitating the development of an action plan for processing concerns including:
  - Encouraging individual members to take specific concerns to the appropriate staff

- Encouraging the Council as a whole address collective concerns to the administration or appropriate staff person in a home
- Helping to book guest speakers
- Facilitating communication with outside stakeholders (without speaking for the Council) – e.g., the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's compliance officer
- Sharing information with the Residents' Council (without speaking for the Family Council) when Family Council members are unable to attend

## Activities that a Staff Assistant Should Leave to Council Members

- Performing any task that members are able to do
- Taking meeting minutes
- Planning and running meetings
- Speaking on behalf of the Council
- Selecting meeting times and dates, topics of interest, projects and activities

While strong staff support through a dedicated staff assistant is important to a successful Family Council, a family-led Council is likely to be more effective. When the Family Council is led by family members, they are more likely to feel responsible for the success of the Council. If problems arise, then members are more willing to work to solve them. Family-led Councils are likely to be more engaging and successful because they pursue the ideas and issues that interest them. Tasks are more likely to get done when duties are spread amongst several Council members. There are numerous reasons why a family-led Council with strong staff support is the way to go!

## Tips for Staff Assistants: Promoting Member Responsibility

- Be clear in your mind about your role in facilitating the work of the Council and discuss this with members in the early meetings of the new Council.
- If a staff assistant tries to do the work of a Council until it is better organized, members may be unwilling or unaccustomed to doing these tasks. Avoid this from the beginning! Listen and facilitate, rather than direct Council activities.
- Encourage members to distribute tasks fairly among themselves to avoid the fear that too much will be expected of one person.
- Help Council members keep track of what they have agreed to do and who is doing what: put tasks in writing and clearly state what is required and how long a member is expected to do the task.
- Seek ways to make tasks easier or more interesting. Try to match members' interests and skills to tasks.
- Resources, advice and help are available from the home and from Family Councils Ontario. Call on these sources of support when you need them.

### Family Councils of Ontario

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