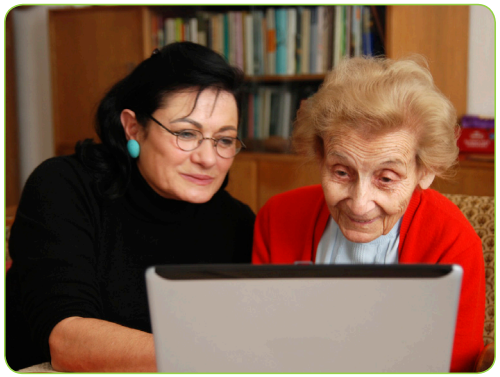
WHAT IS A FAMILY COUNCIL?



Under federal law, family members in a long-term care facility can join together to form a united consumer voice which can communicate concerns to facility administrators and work for resolutions and improvements by forming an independent family council.

Family councils can play a crucial role in voicing concerns, requesting improvements, supporting new family members and residents and supporting facility efforts to work for high quality of care and life in the facility.

Join and support the family council at your loved one's facility!

If no family council exists, join with other family members to form one. Learn more by visiting the Family Council Center at www.theconsumervoice.org/familymember/family-council-center.

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The National CONSUMER VOICE for Quality Long-Term Care formerly NCCNHR

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care was founded out of public concern for the quality of care in nursing homes by Elma L. Holder as the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR). The Consumer Voice advocates for public policies that support quality care and quality of life in all long-term care settings. The Consumer Voice also advocates for a strong, sufficient direct-care workforce and promotes best practices in delivering quality care. The Consumer Voice represents consumers and advocates who define and achieve quality for people with long-term care needs. We accomplish these efforts through:

- **Advocating** for public policies that support quality of care and life;
- **Empowering** and **educating** consumers and families;
- **Training** and **supporting** individuals and groups to advocate for and empower consumers; and
- **Promoting** the critical role of direct-care workers and best practices in quality-care delivery.

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Empowered, Effective and Independent

FAMILY COUNCILS

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RIGHTS & BEST PRACTICES

FAMILY COUNCIL RIGHTS
Under the 1987 Nursing Home Reform Act

- A resident's family has the right to meet in the facility with the families of other residents in the facility.
- The facility must provide a family group with private space if a group exists.
- Staff or visitors may attend meetings at the group's invitation.
- The facility must provide a designated staff person responsible for providing assistance and responding to written requests that result from group meetings.
- When a family group exists, the facility must listen to the views and act upon the grievances and recommendations of residents and families concerning proposed policy and operational decisions affecting resident care and life in the facility.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

- Collect contact information using a sign-in sheet at meetings.
- Plan for the long-term stability of the council by putting structure in place, such as by-laws, and developing leadership.
- Brainstorm about how to address concerns in the facility.
- Communicate regularly with facility staff and management about council concerns and suggestions, actions to be taken, etc.
- Establish contact with the long-term care ombudsman. Locate the ombudsman in your area at www.theconsumervoice.org.
- Focus on common council goals. Identify and continuously assess progress.
- Follow procedures for conducting effective meetings, such as using agendas, keeping minutes, starting and ending meetings on time, sticking to the topic scheduled for discussion and "assigning" tasks to be accomplished before the next meeting.
- Remember results may not be immediate, but family councils that persevere can be very effective.

RESOURCES & GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Consumer Voice has resources, information and opportunities for family councils. Visit www.theconsumervoice.org to learn more. The Family Council Center contains information, tips and tools such as fact sheets, ways to take action, sample council materials, opportunities and more.

Frances Lane

Family Councils for Quality Long-Term Care: Support, Strengthen and Empower, funded by the Frances Lane Memorial Family Council Fund of the Edward H. Lane Foundation, is a current Consumer Voice project. In addition to funding this brochure, the project supports resources and opportunities for family councils in Virginia and across the country.

In Virginia:
The Consumer Voice provides mini-grants ($250 - $1,000 each) directly to independent family councils to fund council activity.

Learn more and apply now!
www.theconsumervoice.org/familymember/lane-family-council

Nationwide:
The Consumer Voice supports and networks independent family councils across the country. Councils have access to a webpage, listserv, conference calls and mailings with information and resources related to family council advocacy.

FAMILY COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Below are some ways Virginia family councils have used their grant money along with the cost of each activity.

- Family council brochures and newsletters for residents and their families ($50)
- Business cards to help publicize the council among family members and residents ($50)
- Social events for residents ($50)
- Welcome packets for new residents ($50)
- Employee recognition events and gifts to honor exemplary staff ($50)
- Mailings with pre-paid postage to families to request contact information for council outreach ($100)
- Guest speakers at family council meetings ($100)
- Display table or bulletin board with information about council news and events ($100)
- Refreshments for family council meetings ($150)
- Buttons and vests for family council members to improve council visibility in the facility ($150)
- Residents' Rights Week luncheon or luncheon with other family council members from nearby facilities to network and discuss current topics and issues ($150)
- Website to communicate with council members who are unable to regularly attend meetings ($200)