

Ways for Residents to Overcome Obstacles to Resident Council Development

OBSTACLES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Residents lack interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the residents about the Resident Council. Ask them about how they feel about the care they receive and any ideas they have about needed improvements. Residents will respond to a personal invitation more readily than a letter or flier. • Explain the rights of Resident Councils to the resident and the potential that Resident Councils can have to promote improvements for them. • Introduce the concept of a Resident Council in a positive way. Resident Councils can be useful for advocacy as well as information sharing and support. All nursing homes have room for improvement and new ideas.
Residents fear retaliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out that issues or concerns will be presented to the facility administration as a group, not an individual, concern. • Tell the residents that no one person's name will be provided. • If residents are reluctant to be seen at Resident Council meetings, discuss the possibility of submitting anonymous suggestions. • Explain that Resident Council members give each other support and strength. • Present the Resident Council positively to both residents and nursing home personnel.
Council members get easily discouraged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest residents pick both short and long-term "achievable" goals so that the Council can see concrete progress. Make sure that Council goals are firmly rooted in the common concerns and interests of the members. • Meet at least once a month to assure continuity and ability to identify goals and work toward them. • Address the negative but focus on small positive changes.
Residents need more information and education on Resident Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest the resident use the Ombudsman program as a resource. • Encourage residents to contact the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care or the National Ombudsman Resource Center with questions or need for guidance. • Encourage residents to ask the facility to arrange for speakers of interest.

<p>The Resident Council experiences resistance from the nursing home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a few resident leaders meet with nursing home management separately to introduce the Council and its purpose in a positive manner. • Encourage residents to communicate constantly and try to respond positively to concerns the facility may have. • Be sure residents know the rights guaranteed to Resident Councils by federal regulations. • Seek the assistance of outside agencies if necessary. • Have residents discuss and come to clear agreements with facility personnel about what can be accomplished and expect that personnel will follow through on those commitments. Follow up on verbal communication with communication in writing to prevent misunderstandings. • Have residents mention the Ombudsman. As an Ombudsman, assist the residents when communicating with the facility.
<p>Council meetings are not resident lead, staff are too involved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage residents to run the meeting and handle the logistics themselves. If they want it to be completely closed door, let them know that is their right. • Tell them you are happy to help but they must be involved in everything you do. For example, if they want you to present the meeting minutes to an Administrator, suggest they go with you. • If there is one particular staff member that is too involved, have the residents suggest to the staff that their upcoming meeting will be closed to only residents and invite the staff member to join a meeting at a later date, which is open to others. • Suggest the residents close the first half of the meeting to only residents so they have a time to talk privately. Suggest that the second half of the meeting be open to staff.
<p>The Council is constantly changing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the Council consistently is key – keep mentioning the Resident Council to the residents you speak to, whether they are new to the facility or have been there for years, ask them if they would like to be involved. • As an ombudsman, if you see a resident who is active and wants to make a difference but isn't part of the Resident Council, tell them about the Council and suggest they join.

For more information visit: www.theconsumervoice.org or www.ltcombudsman.org

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