THE ALBERTA CONTINUING CARE

Resident & Family Council Toolkit

VERSION 2
February 20, 2018



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Alberta Health Services

The Alberta Continuing Care Resident and Family Council Toolkit

The goal of this toolkit is to help care centre residents and their family members make positive change in residents' lives. Two important things about this toolkit are:

- It was built based on an opportunity highlighted in an Alberta Health Services (AHS) 2014 report on improving continuing care in Alberta. The report captured feedback from more than a thousand stakeholders. Click here for the full report.
- A nine-month-long pilot of this toolkit at nine care centres brought suggestions to make it better, and shaped this final version.

Covenant's Network of Excellence in Seniors' Health and Wellness (the Network) took on this project because we believe it can help us innovate and continue to improve how we care for seniors. This helps support our ultimate goal of "enabling seniors to live to the fullness of their capacity as active and connected member of communities."

Part one of the toolkit explains what Resident and Family Councils are and their benefits.

Part two gives information and supporting documents to establish and maintain a council.

Appendix 1 Lists the templates in order of their appearance in the toolkit.

There are hyperlinks to tools and templates throughout the toolkit:

- Click on the link to open the document
- Change the "View" to "Edit Document" (if it opens and looks funny)
- Save it to your computer
- Change it to suit your council's needs:
  - Replace the header with your care centre's logo
  - Customize the content work for your council

Developed by: Covenant's Network of Excellence in Seniors' Health and Wellness

Oversight Provided by: Establishing Resident and Family Councils in Alberta Continuing Care Centres Project Advisory and Planning Committee

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This document contains many hyperlinked templates and is best accessed and used electronically. When opened through the hyperlinks the templates can be edited to suit your council, saved to your computer, and printed.

If there are issues with hyperlinks, please email us at: ShapeSeniorsCare@CovenantHealth.ca

IF YOUR DEFAULT SEARCH ENGINE IS:

- **Explorer** you may get a warning that there isn't enough memory to open documents created in PowerPoint. Just click "OK" and they should still open after a slight delay. There are also documents in the Resources section that won't open in Explorer. For these and the PowerPoint documents you can right click on the link, copy the link address and paste it into Google Chrome, Safari or Firefox.
- **Google Chrome, Safari or Firefox,** the documents should open without problems.

Part 1: An Introduction to Resident and Family Councils

What is a Resident and Family Council?

A Resident and Family Council is a group of people who collaborate to improve residents' lives. Moving to a care centre is a major change, accompanied by a loss of what is familiar and comfortable, both for residents and their families, friends or other caregivers. Participating on a council is a way for both residents and family members to make living in a care centre a happier and more successful experience. Council meetings are a place to raise concerns, have a voice in shaping policy and to hear and understand what each council member has to offer.

Members may be residents, family, care centre staff, administration or volunteers. Council structure is flexible. A council may be run by volunteers or the care centre—it may be large and formal or small and informal, depending on what works best in each case. Each member can contribute to the level that is best for them.

Note: For this toolkit, family refers to anyone who is supporting, caring or advocating for a resident.

What are the benefits of being part 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 care centre, follow up on solutions, have a voice in decisions, and hear staff and administration's views
- generate ideas to improve quality of care and create a vital community
- increase participants' understanding and awareness of what's possible through guest presentations and knowledge sharing

> "Resident and Family councils give families a way to connect with each other and to build a community of hope together.
>
> *Response from Covenant's "Shape Seniors Care" campaign*

What impact can a Resident and Family Council have?

These are successes some Resident and Family Councils in Alberta have had. They have:

- created ways to welcome and support new residents and their families
- developed strong relationships between residents, families and caregivers
- helped families understand long-term care environments
- raised funds for activities such as a "Wishing Well" program that grants residents' wishes. Each month, one modest "wish" is drawn from the well and granted, for example, a pizza lunch from a local restaurant or visit from a local celebrity
- worked with the care centre to develop vegetable gardens, flower gardens, and inside or outside sitting areas for residents to have beautiful places to go
- planned and supported special events including dances, special dinners and seasonal activities
- advocated for improvements to the care centre, such as building a wheelchair ramp or having a security review by local police and corporate security

Part 2: Establishing and Maintaining an Effective Resident and Family Council

Resident and Family Councils are a mechanism for residents and their families to partner with the care centre to improve the quality of life for all residents. Setting up a council takes time and requires participation from all parties.

Who can set up a council?

Residents and their families can set up a council on their own initiative, or care centre staff and administration can create a council when they see a need or are asked to.

If you're interested in setting up a council, you may want to read Alberta Health's standards that every continuing care facility must meet. Specifically, Standards 18.3 and 18.4 explain what the care centre must provide to a council. See Continuing Care Health Service Standards (CCHSS) for more detail (updated January 2016).

Are you interested in setting up a council?

This toolkit is a practical, step-by-step process to follow for setting up and managing a Resident and Family Council.

We have designed it to be used electronically. Each section describes the step and includes hyperlinks to the supporting tools and documents you will need to use. You can click on the hyperlinks in the text or in Appendix 1: Downloadable Tool Templates to download, edit, save or print each tool. You can customize the content and documents to fit your council's needs.

STEP 1 ASK IF YOU ARE READY TO SET UP A COUNCIL

To make sure the council is effective, you will need to consider a few questions.

Are residents and their families interested?

Use the Resident and Family Interest Survey template to create a survey. (You can conduct this on paper or electronically.) Then, use an online tool to enter and keep track of the results (like SelectSurvey, Survey Monkey, Fluid Surveys, or another).

How prepared is your care centre?

Use the Care Centre Readiness Self-Assessment Tool template to help you review care centre policies and procedures and identify any gaps.



Use an online survey tool to make data management easier and to help you make sense of the results.

STEP 2 DECIDE THE STRUCTURE THAT WILL WORK BEST FOR YOUR COUNCIL

Each council is unique and its structure will vary based on:

- residents' needs
- how much support is available from care centre staff and volunteers
- the mix of residents and family members and their levels of experience

We have provided documents to support two different structures. (See the Council Governing Principles section on page 11 for forms.)

Will you use the executive structure?

This style has elected, formal positions (chair, vice chair, and secretary) and defined and assigned responsibilities.

Its benefits include:

- clearly defined roles—for some people, it is more comfortable to know exactly what their responsibility is. This structure also requires fewer people to fill the formal roles
- familiarity—most people recognize the formal structure from other contexts

The disadvantages are that it can be intimidating to people who don't have a lot of experience so fewer people may be willing to nominate themselves for the positions.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

The care centre will provide a space for meetings and will make sure a staff member attends when invited (CCHSS 18.4 a, f ii).

Or will you use the leadership team structure?

This style has elected, informal positions. A group (the leadership team) leads and shares responsibilities.

Its benefits include:

- shared responsibilities—duties do 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's easier to encourage people to step in. Participants may also find joining less intimidating

The disadvantages are that it takes more time to rebuild after the leadership team changes, and because it's collaborative, it may take longer to make decisions which causes some people anxiety. You can find more information on this model in a webinar from the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils: https://youtu.be/weG_zlt6hTo

Other considerations for deciding your council's structure

Ideally, residents and family members lead the council, but care centre staff and administration must collaborate, document and respond to council items. (See the site representative description on page 12).

You may want to start with an informal council. However, best practices say maintaining your council over the long term may require:

- a written Council Governing Principles (see page 11)
- an elected structure with defined roles and responsibilities. These could include:
  - an elected chair, vice chair, and secretary
  - an elected leadership team that shares the council responsibilities



Care centre staff may fill the chair, vice chair and secretary positions when you first set up your council.

Evidence shows it may be beneficial to switch these positions over to resident or family members once your council matures. The most effective councils include a balance of residents, family members and care centre staff on their executive.

STEP 3

ELECT OFFICIALS AND RECRUIT AND FAMILIARIZE NEW MEMBERS

How do you elect members to council positions?

People indicate they are interested in filling a position: first they become a "nominee," then council members review nominees. Once the council chooses the nominees, all residents and family members can vote in the election. Care centre staff cannot vote, but they may help residents vote if they can't vote themselves.

For the ***executive structure***, nominees complete an application form and submit references. See the Council Executive Nominee Application Form Template. We recommend a small working group pre-approve applications to nominate those best suited to the positions. This working group should include residents or family members, care centre administration and a council liaison (see page 12).

For the ***leadership team structure***, nominees complete and submit the Council Leadership Team Nominee Application Form Template. You can begin with care centre staff or volunteers on the council, but it's better to elect members.

How do you recruit, engage and integrate new council members?

Here are some ideas on how to recruit and familiarize new council members:

Create a brochure—Give all new residents and their families a brochure with information about the council. The Council Information Brochure Template helps get you started.

Have a welcome package—Have the council create and hand out welcome packages to new residents and family members. You can include information about the council and its purpose. Find suggestions on what you may want to include in the Welcome Package (Suggested Content).

Connect with residents and families—Discuss the council and its purpose at meetings with residents and their families. Ask residents and their families for input on key questions and issues.

- Ask regular council attendees if they know anyone who might like to get involved. Consider phoning families every week to let them know about upcoming meetings and key agenda items.
- Post information, meeting notices, and meeting minutes on the care centre's website and bulletin boards.
- Include council information on billing notices sent to family members.

Hold an orientation session—Invite new residents, new council members and their families to a Resident and Family Council Orientation. Covenant centres can use the personalized Orientation Presentation Template. Other care centres can import the slides into their own template or use the Orientation Presentation Outline to create their own.

Engage care centre staff—Ask for suggestions for recruiting new members.

To familiarize people with your council and help with advertising and recruitment, play the orientation presentation on televisions in common areas.

STEP 4

PLAN AND BOOK YOUR MEETINGS

How do you advertise and prepare for council meetings?

Use the following tools to help you advertise your meetings and message:

- Council Information Poster Template
- Meeting Notice Template
- A council newsletter (see the Newsletter Template) which also lets you highlight all the good work your council does

Arranging for alternate ways to attend meetings can make it possible for more people to participate.

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

- holding teleconference or web-conference meetings (such as Skype for Business)
- considering different meeting times, such as evenings or weekends
- choosing a time of day, week or month with more family already at the facility
- tying a meeting to an event that gets large attendance such as a party or barbeque

Some residents may find it difficult to participate in large meetings. To encourage their involvement, you can:

- host a short pre-council meeting to hear their concerns.
- have a council member follow up after the meeting. They update the resident on what was discussed and if there were any outcomes to their issues.

In your meetings, remember to share stories, work towards positive solutions and have fun!

A Practical Meeting Considerations Checklist helps you prepare for council meetings. It includes timing, logistics, advertising and others.

What meeting materials will you require?

Adapt these basic meeting material templates to your council's needs:

Attendance Sheet

An Attendance Sheet (executive structure or leadership structure) lets you track changes in attendance over time and alerts you if interest is decreasing or if meeting times or dates are not working.

Agenda

The Agenda Template (executive structure or leadership team structure) helps you stick to your topics and stay on time.

Minutes

The Minutes Template (executive structure or leadership team structure) lets you document your discussions and capture items that require action.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

The council meeting minutes need to be made available to all residents, their families and all care centre staff (CCHSS 18.4 d).

STEP 5 DECIDE WHAT INFORMATION YOUR COUNCIL WILL TRACK

Whether small or large, an executive or leadership team style, your council needs clear processes for residents and family members to register, track and follow up on concerns (see page 11 for tools to help you do this). These practices develop good communication and transparency, which builds a constructive and effective council. They also help with evaluating how well the council functions.

It is important to track the positive things your council accomplishes, such as:

- educational opportunities
- initiatives as they are happening
- projects you complete successfully and their results
- donations and income from fundraisers



STEP 6 HOLD EFFECTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

How do you encourage input from council members at meetings?

To help people feel comfortable participating, consider:

- brainstorming and prioritizing solutions as a group (the nominal group technique often works well if you prepare for it) and select ideas to consider
- dividing your members into small groups, each with a concern to address. After discussing it, each group brings their solutions back to the larger group
- asking members to identify their top idea to improve all residents' quality of life and decide on one or two achievable items to discuss
- setting up informal or ongoing committees to look at specific issues

How do you ensure confidentiality at meetings?

To ensure confidentiality, the names of individuals discussed at meetings must not become part of the minutes, newsletters, etc.

You may also want to have your council executive sign a Code of Conduct & Confidentiality Agreement that outlines expected behaviours of council members and representatives.

How do you handle difficult situations during your meetings?

Inevitably, situations will arise that are outside the council chair or meeting leader's comfort zone or knowledge base. While they may be uncomfortable, the situations need to be dealt with right away or they can disrupt meetings and the council's effectiveness.

This Handling Common Meeting Problems and Difficult Behaviours document suggests ways to resolve difficult situations.

How do you document and follow up on issues?

It's important to track issues so you can follow up later and have a way to evaluate your council's progress.

- Implement a process to track and follow up on issues raised at meetings.
- Report on progress at every meeting. This fosters transparency and reinforces that the council is making a difference.
- Document items that cannot be resolved and arrange for appropriate follow-up.

Find an example of a formal follow-up and tracking process on page 11.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

The care centre must respond to feedback and issues in writing in a timely manner and make the responses available to all residents, families and staff. (CCHSS 18.4 b, c).

STEP 7 EVALUATE YOUR COUNCIL

To ensure your council is meeting its members' needs, evaluate its effectiveness and member satisfaction at least annually. This will identify potential issues before they interfere with your council's the effectiveness.

How do you evaluate the council?

Use the council evaluation survey templates (executive structure or leadership team structure) to help you create a survey. (You can add or remove questions to suit your needs.) Give the survey to everyone who attends your meetings.

Analyzing the results should tell you if you need to improve your council or if you have any communication or knowledge gaps among members. It can also reveal issues such as:

- lack of strong or consistent leadership
- lack of effective collaboration between the council and care centre administration
- lack of participation from residents and family members
- little evidence of the council making a difference
- the council depends too much on care centre staff to lead, and residents and family are not leading enough

If you make large changes to your council, evaluate the changes to see if they met your members' needs.

Evaluation does not need to be complex or formal. You can:

- add a question or two about the council in any centre-wide satisfaction surveys you are already doing
- ask how satisfied people are at council meetings
- ask one or two questions about council participation, effectiveness and satisfaction at regularly scheduled family meetings

What do you do with your evaluation results?

Share the results with the council by highlighting strong areas and noting areas that need to improve. Discuss the areas to improve at a council meeting.

STEP 8 SUPPORT YOUR COUNCIL'S SUCCESS OVER TIME

As your Resident and Family Council grows and matures, you may want to make your structure more formalized with Council Governing Principles, a formal follow-up and tracking process, a site representative, and a council liaison.

What is a Council Governing Principles document?

A Council Governing Principles document sets out:

- how the council operates
- roles of the council executives
- meeting styles
- accountability
- how much care centre administration is involved

A good Council Governing Principles document means each council member knows their responsibility, which helps meetings run more smoothly.

These two templates are a starting point to help you develop your own:

- The Council Governing Principles Template (executive) has a formal structure that you can edit to fit your council.
- The Council Governing Principles Template (leadership team) has an informal structure and is designed for roles to be shared among individuals.

Plan to revisit your Governing Principles annually with your executive or with a small working group to ensure it fits your council's needs.

How do we follow up and track council activities?

Below are two forms and an Excel tracking sheet that facilitate the follow-up and tracking process. Modify the forms and the tracking sheet to best suit your council's needs.

Outstanding Item Submission Form

First, use the Outstanding Item Submission Form to document meeting issues that require follow-up. To use it, the council chair or leadership team member:

- fills out the form after each meeting and lists all items that require follow-up
- assigns an item code (the meeting year-month-item#) and describes each issue
- signs off on the form
- submits to the care centre administrator

The care centre administrator signs off after they have read it.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

The care centre must respond to feedback and issues in writing in a timely manner and make the responses available to all residents, families and staff. (CCHSS 18.4 b, c).

Outstanding Item Feedback Report

Second, complete the Outstanding Item Feedback Report. To use it, the care centre administrator or site representative:

- completes the form to report on activities to improve, with a new form for every council meeting that has information on unresolved items
- identifies each item with the item code and a brief summary
- designates the report as an update or final report

Outstanding Item Tracking Sheet

The information from the follow-up forms and feedback reports goes into the Outstanding Item Tracking Sheet for long-term documenting, tracking, reporting and storage. To complete this document:

- the care centre administrator or site representative enters all updates before each meeting
- every quarter or twice a year, the administrator uses this tracking sheet to report on:
  - new items in progress
  - items from previous reporting periods still in progress
  - items completed in the last reporting period
  - final resolution of completed items

What is a site representative?

Ideally, a site representative is the care centre administrator (or their designate) who attends all meetings. Councils work better if the care centre leadership is actively involved and partners with residents and their families.

The site representative:

- supports the council chair or meeting leader as the care centre representative
- collaborates closely with the council chair or meeting leader to ensure business progresses

HELPFUL INFORMATION

The Continuing Care Health Service Standards (CCHSS) stipulate that the care centre provides a staff member who can participate in meetings and act as a liaison to help the council (18.3 b).

- reviews and approves minutes to distribute
- helps advertise upcoming meetings with the secretary or leadership team
- ensures all items for follow-up are properly tracked and reported on
- helps those following up on items collect the most up-to-date information

What is a council liaison and how do you recruit them?

The council liaison is a volunteer trained to support the council who:

- communicates to the care centre administrator on council needs and progress
- is a link between care centre staff and administration and the residents and their families
- supports administrative tasks and assumes the duties of the council secretary or recorder when necessary

Identify a volunteer who is interested. Because the position can be time-consuming, especially in the beginning, ensure volunteers are aware of the time commitment.

Council Liaison training is available to interested volunteers:

- ***Covenant care centre***—Contact Patient Relations at 780-735-7494 or 1-877-295-6344 (toll free) with your volunteer's name and contact information and they will arrange training
- ***Other organizations***—Contact Engagement and Patient Experience at patient.engagement@ahs.ca for information

How can you enrich your council and care centre?

Provide education sessions for your council members—councils bringing in outside speakers can be a highly valuable contribution. You can identify topics of interest at meetings or use the results of the Resident and Family Interest Survey.

You can invite guest speakers from inside your organization to talk about internal topics or invite speakers from outside your organization. The Inventory of Resources and Supports for Caregivers in Alberta identifies many support organizations for caregivers whose representatives can talk at your meetings.

Find other resources or sources of education in our References and Resources section below.



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. The many other resources available include:

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 Costal Health's - Guide for Vancouver Costal 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.

Appendix 1: Downloadable Tool Templates

Instructions

Click on the hyperlink to bring up the tool you wish to edit. The tools are organized in the order they appear in the toolkit.

Please remember to edit the:

- header to include your care centre's logo
- content to fit your council

Tool Templates

1 Step one: ask if you are ready to set up a council

Resident and Family Interest Survey Template

Options to submit the survey:

Online—Use an online survey tool (such as SelectSurvey, Survey Monkey, Fluid Surveys) to analyze and manage the data more easily.

In print—Provide a printed survey for those not comfortable with or able to complete it online.

- Remember to include extra space below questions that ask for open-ended answers.
- We recommend assigning someone to enter the printed survey forms into the online database for complete data analysis.

Care Centre Readiness Self-Assessment Tool Template

3 Step three: elect officials and recruit and familiarize new members

Council Executive Nominee Application Form Template OR
Council Leadership Team Nominee Application Form Template

Instructions:

These documents are set up as electronic forms so you can complete them in Microsoft Word.

To make this form active and allow people to click on check boxes and enter text:

- Select the Developer tab and click on "Restrict Editing" in the "Protect" group.
- Under #2 in the far right frame, click the "Allow only this type of editing" box and choose "Filling in forms" from the drop down box.
- Click on the "Yes, start enforcing protection" box and set a password.
  - NOTE: If you forget your password you WILL NOT be able to make changes to the form in the future.

If you do not wish to create an electronic form, replace all the grey boxes and entry areas with regular boxes and leave space for people to type or write answers.

Council Information Brochure Template

Welcome Package (Suggested Content)

Orientation Presentation Template, which also includes:

- "Getting to Know You" Games: BINGO
- "Getting to Know You" Games: What do we have in common?
- Tips for Being an Engaged Council Member
- Orientation Presentation Outline

4 Step four: plan and book your meetings

Council Information Poster Template

Meeting Notice Template

Newsletter Template

Practical Meeting Considerations Checklist

Attendance Sheet (executive) OR
Attendance Sheet (leadership team)

Agenda Template (executive) OR
Agenda Template (leadership team)

Minutes Template (executive) OR
Minutes Template (leadership team)

6 Step six: hold effective and productive meetings

Code of Conduct & Confidentiality Agreement

Handling Common Meeting Problems and Difficult Behaviours

7 Step seven: evaluate your council

Council Evaluation Survey Template (executive) OR
Council Evaluation Survey Template (leadership team)

Options to submit the survey:

Online—Use an online survey tool (such as SelectSurvey, Survey Monkey, Fluid Surveys) to analyze and manage the data more easily.

In print—Provide a printed survey for those not comfortable with or able to complete it online.

- Remember to include extra space below questions that ask for open-ended answers.
- We recommend assigning someone to enter the printed survey forms into the online database for complete data analysis.

8 Step eight: support your council's success over time

Council Governing Principles Template (executive) OR
Council Governing Principles Template (leadership team)

Outstanding Item Submission Form Template

Outstanding Item Feedback Report Template

Outstanding Item Tracking Sheet Template