



MICHIGAN LONG TERM CARE
OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Fact Sheet: **Family Councils in Nursing Homes**

What is a nursing home family council?

A family council is a group of family members, as defined by the resident, of the same nursing home that meets on a regular basis to discuss issues and concerns regarding the home and plan activities for residents. The council is **independent**; it is organized by family members, not by the nursing home.

What is the purpose of a family council?

The main purpose of family councils is to improve the quality of life in the home and to give family members a voice in decisions that affect residents. The nursing home is required to listen to and act on family council recommendations on resident care and life in the home.

What are the benefits of a family council?

- Allows family members to support each other and share information
- Improves communication so family members can know what is happening in the home
- Helps identify problems and address concerns as a group
- Serves as a sounding board for new ideas
- Sponsors speakers or educational events for residents and family members
- Improves residents' quality of life by planning fun activities and events

Can any family member participate in a family council?

Family members have the right to participate in the family council unless the resident does not want the family member to participate. Nursing home staff, visitors, local ombudsmen, and other guests may attend family council meetings only at the group's invitation.

How are family councils organized?

Family councils are run by family members of the home's residents. They meet in a private area of the home on a regular basis, choose topics for discussion, and establish a way to exchange information with nursing home staff. The home must assign a staff person to provide assistance to the council and respond to family council written requests.

Is a family council meeting a "family night?"

No. Family nights are educational or social events planned by nursing home staff.

Do family members have the right to organize a family council?

Yes. Nursing homes that get payments from Medicare or Medicaid must allow family councils to operate and must provide space in the facility for council meetings and activities. Michigan law also gives family members of nursing home residents the right to present concerns without retaliation.

What is the difference between family councils and resident councils?

A resident council is organized by residents, while family councils are organized by the family members of residents. Federal law requires nursing homes to allow and support both resident and family councils.

Where can one get more information about family councils?

Ombudsman can answer questions, help start a family council at the home, or speak about long term care topics at a council meeting. Call 1-866-485-9393 to reach your local ombudsman.

Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Free and Confidential Help

1-866-485-9393

Email: MLTCOP@meji.org

Website: MLTCOP.org