

## ***THE PIEDMONT AREA REGIONAL FAMILY COUNCIL: WHY IS IT WORTH YOUR TIME?***

What is a family council?

A family council is a group of families and friends of nursing home (facility) residents that:

- ◆ Works to improve the quality of care and quality of life for facility residents; and
- ◆ Provides families and loved ones with a voice in the decisions that affect them and their loved ones.

A family council is **not** primarily:

- ◆ A support group, although it provides support;
- ◆ A “family night” social event, although it may decide to host or participate in social gatherings; or
- ◆ A volunteer group, although its work is accomplished by loved ones volunteering their time and talents.

### Philosophy of a Family Council

Family councils try to work together with the nursing homes so that residents receive the best care possible. While this arrangement may not always be possible, and sometimes strong advocacy is what is needed, cooperative efforts to achieve the highest quality of nursing home life should certainly be the goal. Councils and facilities which that work together can accomplish much more than those which are only that are locked in conflict.

### Why a Family Council?

For many families, the placement of a loved one in a nursing home is not the end of care or worry. It can be a very stressful time. When there are concerns about care, some family members may feel overwhelmed and frustrated. The power of many people working together can make a big difference: *Many voices are stronger than one*. The fear of retaliation or concern about speaking out alone is also solved when there exists a collective voice: *safety in numbers*.

### What are some things a Family Council can do?

- ◆ Act on concerns and complaints affecting nursing home residents
- ◆ Support families who are concerned about nursing care
- ◆ Communicate with the nursing home administrator and staff
- ◆ Serve as a sounding board for the nursing home administration on new ideas and improvements
- ◆ Work for positive change in the facility and the long-term care system
- ◆ Inform families about important nursing home issues
- ◆ Sponsor activities that benefit all residents

Adapted from *Family Guide to Effective Family Councils* prepared for the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago and the Evanston Commission on Aging by Robyn Grant, M.S.W. <http://www.ltcombudsman.org/uploads/FamilyCouncils.pdf>

**\*Strength in Numbers:  
The Importance of Nursing Home Family Councils**

Why Family-led Family Councils Benefit Families, Residents and Facility Personnel

**They promote open communication**

- ◆ Family members feel free to speak openly in meetings where staff are not present
- ◆ Give facilities honest feedback that they can use to improve the quality of their services

**They promote a sense of purpose**

- ◆ Offer an additional option for family members to channel their anger constructively
- ◆ Give families a chance to talk with each other about common concerns and how they can be addressed
- ◆ Help to bring complaints together so that facility is not flooded with several individual complaints at once
- ◆ Allow for focus on facility-wide concerns and improvements for all residents

**They are a source of empowerment**

- ◆ Give families control of whether facility staff attends meetings.
- ◆ Families can come up with creative ideas for dealing with problems
- ◆ It builds a trusting relationship between families and facilities when they are working together
- ◆ They provide power in numbers!