

**Maryland Family Council Project**  
**Ways for Families to Overcome Obstacles to Family Council Development**

OBSTACLE	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
<b>Family members lack time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin and end meetings on time. If family members see that meetings are efficient and purposeful, they will be more likely to come to future meetings</li> <li>● Share leadership responsibilities and delegate small tasks to members so that the time commitment for individual members is not too substantial</li> <li>● Make use of agendas to keep meeting on track</li> <li>● Schedule meetings at times that are convenient for family members</li> </ul>
<b>Family members lack interest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce yourself to other family members on your loved one's unit. Ask them about how they've felt about the care provided to their loved one and any ideas they have about needed improvements. Family members will respond to a personal invitation more readily than a letter or flier.</li> <li>● Explain the rights of family councils to other family members and the potential that family councils can have to promote improvements at the home.</li> <li>● Introduce the concept of a family council in a positive way. Family councils can be useful for advocacy as well as information sharing and support. All nursing homes have room for improvement and new ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>Family members fear retaliation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If family members are reluctant to be seen at family council meetings, discuss the possibility of meeting off-site so that family members will feel more comfortable coming to meetings.</li> <li>● Explain that family council members give each other support and strength. Also point out that issues or concerns will be presented to the facility administration as a group, not an individual, concern.</li> <li>● Present the family council positively to both family members and nursing home personnel.</li> </ul>
<b>Council members get discouraged easily</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● Meet at least once a month to assure continuity and ability to identify goals and work toward them.</li> </ul>

<b>Family members lack information and education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contact NCCNHR with questions or need for guidance</li> <li>● Use the ombudsman program as a resource</li> <li>● Ask the facility to arrange for speakers of interest</li> </ul>
<b>The family council experiences resistance from the nursing home</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have a few leaders meet with nursing home management separately to introduce the council and its purpose in a positive manner.</li> <li>● Communicate constantly and try to respond positively to concerns the facility may have.</li> <li>● Know the rights guaranteed to family councils by federal regulations.</li> <li>● Seek the assistance of outside agencies if necessary.</li> <li>● 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Difficulty getting names of other family members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See above for suggestions on how to work with the facility</li> <li>● Start a “buddy system” where council members greet new families and invite them to council meetings</li> <li>● Keep a sign in sheet for each meeting and gather contact information</li> </ul>

**For more information, contact:**

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