

High Five: July

5 Tips for Starting a Council

1. Educate and build support.

Identify other active residents/families and connect about a resident or family council and benefits. Share contact information. Locate helpful resources that can be easily shared. Reach out to a local long-term care ombudsman for information.

2. Involve the facility early.

Focus on shared goals versus conflict. Inquire about past councils and their experiences. Provide resources if needed or requested. Establish a communication process for council concerns to be addressed.

3. Hold an introductory meeting/social.

Determine location, date and time. Talk about the value of a council, including its purpose, benefits and goals. Identify possible rebuttals and plan responses. Identify interest in potential leadership roles. Determine when the council would like to meet, based on schedules and preferences. Consider virtual/hybrid options if there is interest.

4. Address feedback and establish meeting structure.

Address pushback directly, meeting or communicating 1:1 with those who have additional questions. Listen, acknowledge valid points, and show how a council can be effective to help address items. Secure a meeting space, schedule, and format for the council. Establish leadership roles. Use a set agenda, document decisions and action items. Work with staff to establish a facility point of contact and timeframe for responses from the facility when concerns are brought forward.

5. Be persistent but patient.

Don't give up. Find ways to promote the council. Work with facility staff for communication; in admission paperwork, in a facility newsletter, on a council bulletin board or wall, or posted in a visible spot for residents/families, for example. Recognize and celebrate all council successes, big or small. Know one constant is change: those people involved with and leading the council may change over time, but with an established structure, transitions can be smoother.