

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEES

SUPPORTING RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Co-developed with residents, this information sheet was created as a resource for long-term care (LTC) leadership and teams seeking to work collaboratively with residents as part of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Committees. Residents bring a unique and vital perspective to discussions about quality and want to support improvements that make their homes excellent places to live, work and visit.

The Fundamental Principle

The *Fixing Long-Term Care Act (FLTCA, 2021)* is built upon the “Fundamental Principle” which states:

“...a long-term care home is **primarily the home of its residents** and is to be operated so that it is a place where they may live with dignity and in security, safety and comfort and have their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs adequately met.”

What does HOME mean to residents?

- Home is not a facility or place of business, it’s where people live.
- Residents are not plucked out of community and placed in LTC – they continue to be full citizens with rights, values and a purpose.
- Residents want the best, fullest, most joyful life possible.
- Residents live in their home 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and therefore they see, hear, smell, feel things that others (team members, family/caregivers etc.) might not.
- Residents want to be part of the solution to any challenge or need for improvement in their home.

CQI Committee Membership

The existence of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Committee is legislatively mandated (FLTCA, 2021) and must include at least one resident. The responsibilities of the Committee are to:

- Monitor and report on quality issues, residents’ quality of life, and the overall quality of care and services.
- Consider, identify and make recommendations regarding priority areas for quality improvement.
- Coordinate and support the implementation of the continuous quality improvement initiative.

The Essential Role of Residents’ Councils

Residents’ Councils are legislatively mandated, therefore operationally essential. Among many powers outlined in the FLTCA, 2021 (section 63), the Residents’ Council advises the licensee of any concerns or recommendations the Council has about the operation of the home, and what residents would like to see done to improve care or the quality of life in the home.

Residents’ Councils, present in every home, are a conduit for channeling resident voices, opinions and requests into positive actions in the home.

Residents have helped to identify the following considerations to support authentic resident engagement in the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee:

EXPLAIN THE 'WHY'

Take the time to educate and inform residents about the scope of responsibility of the CQI Committee and introduce the Quality Lead to the Residents' Council. If your home has a resident newsletter, consider including an article or recurring column to promote your CQI efforts. Regular updates can also be shared at Council meetings when attending as a guest. When working with residents, it is important to educate and discuss why any quality area or initiative is important. Some clinical indicators and metrics may not resonate with residents until context is provided, such as reporting requirements.

ASK RESIDENTS

Not sure how to ensure that a resident's committee participation is meaningful or if you're measuring the right things? Ask them. Your questions might include:

- What do you hope to get out of this meeting/Committee involvement?
- What methods of engaging residents in the CQI Committee would work?
- What does quality mean to you? What does a good day look like?

PROTECT FROM 'TOKENISM'

OARC recommends including more than one resident on your committee, reflecting experiences from different parts of the home. Consider recruiting residents who are excited and equipped to advocate for and build relationships with their peers. Commit to co-design. Residents want to be involved from the beginning of a project, as opposed to being engaged once the work has begun. Quality Leads and other committee members can elicit resident feedback through day-to-day interactions outside of meetings and bring this information back to the broader group.

CREATE DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT AND EXPLAIN THE WORK

In addition to sharing your committee's Terms of Reference, residents might appreciate receiving meeting materials in different formats (including large print). It might be helpful if the Quality Lead meets with resident members in advance of the CQI meeting to share information and hand-outs, so they feel more prepared to contribute. OARC recommends that committees avoid the use of acronyms.

BE CREATIVE, OPTIMISTIC AND REALISTIC

OARC encourages you to be open to challenging the 'status quo' by trying new techniques and listening to 'out of the box solutions'. Consider inviting resident members to open your meeting by speaking about what quality means to them, in their home. When challenges present themselves, discuss openly with accurate information/data. This can empower everyone involved in your collaborative work.

For Residents, By Residents

Ontario Association of Residents' Councils

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