

RESIDENTS' COUNCILS

REPRESENTATION

Ontario Long-Term Care Homes

ELEVATE COUNCIL LEADERSHIP TEAMS AND CREATE MORE INCLUSIVE COUNCILS WITH HOME AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Residents' Council Home Area (or Floor) Representatives are resident leaders who serve as ambassadors for their respective areas of their long-term care (LTC) home. They are committed to getting to know their peers, including the residents they see and interact with on a daily basis in programs and at mealtimes, but also through 1:1 social visits with residents who don't often leave their rooms or join activities. These resident leaders strike up conversations with team members, managers, volunteers, caregivers and family visitors and are willing to speak up and share their lived experiences and feedback at Residents' Council meetings.

Residents' Council Home Area Representative Role

Home Area Representatives are engaged in various capacities to enrich the resident experience, build friendships, and contribute to quality improvement. By identifying resident leaders from throughout your home, your Council is in a better position to share the responsibilities and give more residents the chance to showcase their strengths. **For example, Home Area Representatives can:**

- Serve as Residents' Council champions/encourage participation at meetings
- Personally welcome new residents moving into the home on their floors
- Help to keep co-residents feeling connected supported and informed
- Collect feedback, questions and concerns from co-residents to share (with permission) on their behalf at general Residents' Council meetings
- Spend time getting to know peers living with cognitive changes and those who may need support with speech/communication to ensure their lived experiences and needs are represented at Council meetings
- Participate on LTC "tour teams" with administration, to infuse the resident voice when prospective residents and their family/friends tour the home
- Contribute to human resources/hiring processes by co-developing interview questions for potential LTC team members or sitting in on interview panels
- Co-develop and co-facilitate education and training, including education sessions on the Residents' Bill of Rights (see: [Through Our Eyes Program](#)).
- Work with team members to recognize/honour peers who have passed away
- Provide input in program planning and special events in the home
- Participate on internal quality committees, bringing home-area specific input

RECRUITING HOME AREA REPRESENTATIVES

OARC recommends bringing the idea of Home Area Representatives to your current Residents' Council leaders/Executive to discuss the benefits of adding more resident strengths and voices to your Council operations. **As a next step, share the new role at a Residents' Council meeting (virtual or in-person).**

Working with your Residents' Council Assistant and Programs/Activation Department team members, find ways to inform residents throughout your home that the Residents' Council is looking for Resident Leaders to serve in a new exciting role of Home Area Representatives. Recruit through word of mouth, messaging in your home's newsletter, posters or through other means. Residents may volunteer or be nominated. **Be sure to document your process in your meeting minutes and reference/update your Residents' Council [Bylaws](#) as needed.**

HOW MANY?

The number of Home Area Representatives is up to your Council. Your choice may be guided by the size of your home and the number of willing resident leaders. Some Councils may decide to have at least 2 Representatives per floor/area for more of a "buddy system" approach, ensuring there is always one person to attend meetings and/or represent their respective part of the home.

DO HOME AREA REPRESENTATIVES NEED TO BE ELECTED?

Not necessarily. Every resident who wishes to contribute to the work of Council should be included. If your Council determines that you will have up to 10 Resident Representatives (2 per floor), and you have 10 people come forward to express interest, there might not be a need to hold an election. Some residents may be intimidated or may shy away from the opportunity if they feel they need to be 'voted' into the role. OARC encourages you to keep this process flexible and welcoming. Focus on resident strengths and work towards creating a supportive and inclusive home environment. Refer to OARC's [Elections Fact sheet](#) for more information about elections.

For Residents, By Residents

Ontario Association of Residents' Councils

T 905-731-3710 x 220 | Toll-free 1-800-532-0201

F 905-731-1755 | info@ontarc.com | www.ontarc.com



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