

Residents' Councils: Frequency Asked Questions

This document was created to address some of the specific questions that have been posed by Resident Leaders and Residents' Council supporters. The ideas presented are recommendations from the OARC team and showcase examples of promising practices shared by long-term care Residents' Councils from across the province.

Q1. How long should we keep copies of our residents' council meeting minutes?

OARC recommends that hard copies of meeting minutes be retained and made available for reference by residents and Ministry of Long-Term Care review for 2 years. Electronic copies of minutes should be kept for 7 years and should include scans of any signed meeting minutes and evidence of Concern Response follow-up/action plans. It is also a good idea to make note of any cancelled Council meetings and document the reason for the cancellation.

FOR EXAMPLE: If you keep a hardcopy binder of minutes, and the in-person June meeting was cancelled or adapted due to outbreak, consider including a placeholder in the binder documenting what took place.

NOTE: During periods of outbreak, consider using a virtual format or other adaptation to ensure continuity and connection amongst residents. Refer to [Outbreak Resources](#) from OARC.

Q2. Does our Residents' Council have to meet on a monthly basis?

The frequency with which your Residents' Council comes together is up to the residents. OARC recommends a monthly meeting to help maintain continuity and connection between residents. When Councils meet on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis, meetings may run longer and residents may forget what was previously covered or miss important updates. To keep meetings short and concise, some Councils have now increased meetings to twice a month.

Q3. Is it a requirement for Residents' Councils to post their meeting minutes?

Under the Fixing Long Term Care Act c. 39, s. 85 (1), (2), (3), long-term care homes are required to support the Residents' Council in posting their most recent minutes (with Council consent) in a conspicuous and accessible location. OARC recommends creating Residents' Council Information Boards on every floor/home area to make information (including minutes) accessible to all residents. This may include having additional hardcopies (including enlarged font options) of minutes available to those who like to receive information in this format. Be sure to consult with residents as part of your process and utilize an area where residents using mobility aids can easily access information.

FOR EXAMPLE: Consider placing materials (or copies of them) at a level where someone who uses a wheelchair is able to read or reach it.

NOTE: If residents express apprehension about posting their minutes – explore why this might be the case. OARC recommends using resident initials or removing any identifiers altogether when recording minutes so that residents don't feel that a particular issue can be tied back to them to help ensure privacy and confidentiality whenever possible.

EXAMPLE: Consider using initials or a general expression such as 'residents from the second-floor south home area shared that their laundry has been returned with wrinkles over the last month.'

Q4. The Family Council has asked to see a copy of our minutes. Do we need to share?

While it is not a requirement to share or exchange minutes, your Council might benefit from this practice or want to do so. Is there an opportunity for collaboration? Can Councils partner on a project or quality improvement? At some long-term care homes, the Family Council has invited a representative from Residents' Council to attend their meetings (and vice versa) to periodically share ideas/themes in the spirit of collaboration.

Q5. We have several vacancies on our Residents' Council leadership team. How can we sustain our Council and recruit new leaders?

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES:

- Encourage existing Resident Leaders to sit down with other residents one-to-one to share about the Council and its importance and identify how residents can contribute
- Work with your Residents' Council Assistant, Personal Support Workers and other team members to identify any residents who may already take on leadership roles in the home or who may be interested based on their past experiences
- Create and circulate posters and brochures highlighting Council information
- Incorporate a Residents' Council update as part of your home's newsletter or website
- Host an event to create a buzz about the Residents' Council and use this opportunity to recruit members
- Consider a shift to a new approach to Residents' Council Leadership using OARC's fact sheets on [Shared Leadership](#) and [Home Area Representatives](#).

Q6. Our Residents' Council is due to have an election – how can we do this?

While Roberts' Rules of Order and having a formalized process for elections has been the "gold standard" for many Residents' Councils, the OARC team understands that this is not always achievable, realistic or necessary, especially under the current circumstances.

Given the logistics and complexity of coordinating Residents' Council elections, OARC suggests that there may be no need to have an election. Instead, focus your efforts on engaging

residents from throughout your home as potential leaders. Any resident who wishes to support the work of Council in a leadership capacity should be considered/included. It is unlikely that you find yourself in a situation where you have too many residents interested in taking on a leadership role. OARC's [Elections](#) and [Shared Leadership](#) Fact Sheets may assist you in your planning. Don't forget to update your Residents' Council [Bylaws](#) to reflect any new governance structure and agreed-upon elections protocols.

Q7. Our Residents' Council meeting format has changed. Do we still have to follow OARC's Agenda and Minute template?

Resident Leaders have the flexibility to modify OARC templates to meet the needs of their Councils. Meetings might need to be less structured as you allow the shifting needs/priorities of residents to guide your discussions. This is okay.

The OARC Minute template is fully customizable and allows you to prioritize and/or defer discussions on a particular topic for a future meeting. The minute template also captures the legislated full scope and powers of the Council and can be a helpful guide in identifying the LTC home's responsibilities and obligations to the Council. The final decision on how the agenda and minutes are captured is up to each Council.

Q8. How can residents be meaningfully engaged in Quality Committees at their long-term care home?

While most homes have well-established Continuous Quality Improvement Committees, it is a fairly new requirement in the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 to have representation from both the Residents' Council and the Family Council on this committee. Meaningful engagement takes some advanced consideration and planning that should always start with a conversation with residents. Consider the following:

- Invite the chair/lead of the Quality Committee to attend a Residents' Council meeting to provide an overview of the committee and invite residents to express interest in participating
- Consider having multiple residents involved to represent different perspectives from around the home and to ensure there is always a resident involved in the case of meeting conflict, illness etc.
- Ask for resident input on important aspects when planning Quality meetings, including considerations around room layout and sensory needs to ensure that residents are able to fully participate (example: microphone, written materials, screen projections)
- Circulate written reports/materials in advance if available
- Remind residents of meeting time and location and assist residents with getting to/from meetings

- Debrief following meeting – what worked well, opportunities for enhancement
- Summarize highlights from your meeting, that might be appropriate, to share at the next general Residents' Council meeting
- As part of the Quarterly Quality updates, you are already doing as part of Residents' Council meetings, consider inviting your Administrator, Quality Lead or Director of Care to speak to quality areas in greater detail

Q9. What is the best way to roll out/educate residents and team members about the new expanded Residents' Bill of Rights?

- Post the Bill of Rights in every home area and make [language translations](#) available
- Provide hardcopies of the CLEO "[Every Resident - Bill of Rights for people who live in Ontario long-term care homes](#)" booklet
- Share 2 or 3 Residents' Rights at each Residents' Council meeting and provide examples of how they are actioned in the home
- Teach the Residents' Bill of Rights through the resident perspective during mandatory annual and new team member orientation using OARC's [Through Our Eyes: Bringing the Residents' Bill of Rights Alive](#) program
- Host an activity or event where the new Residents' Rights are highlighted
- Include a copy of the Residents' Rights in each Welcome package for when a Resident moves into your home

OARC is here to help! Please reach out to us for tailored education and support.

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