

# RESIDENTS' COUNCILS

## LEADERSHIP

Ontario Long-Term Care Homes

### A PROMISING APPROACH TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND ENHANCE RESIDENTS' COUNCIL GOVERNANCE THROUGH A SHARED LEADERSHIP TEAM MODEL

Residents' Councils' leadership structures can differ from home to home. Some Councils adopt a traditional executive structure with residents holding the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Other Councils may decide to combine all of the executive positions and collectively be known as the Residents' Council Leadership Team, without assigning traditional titles to any one person. **This Fact Sheet is designed to support the understanding and implementation of the Shared Leadership Team Model**

#### RESIDENT LEADERS EMBRACE SHARED LEADERSHIP

"There has been a remarkable shift from 'I' to 'We' thinking – we've learned a lot about teamwork by transitioning to this model and it's enabled more residents to grow and shine as leaders." ~ Resident Leader

"Everyone is equal on our team. Everybody does everything as needed on this team. This way we all have jobs and they are all even." ~ Resident Leader

"I am more comfortable with this one [leadership team model] because we are more of a team as opposed to one person doing one thing and the other doing another." ~ Resident Leader

"We come together as a whole for the greater good of the whole home and we are not just a group of people who come together to do a function. We have become friends." ~ Resident Leader

#### BENEFITS OF SHARED LEADERSHIP

The responsibilities of leading the Residents' Council are shared equally across the members of the leadership team. This leadership team structure may appeal to Residents' Councils because it:

- Eases the pressure of feeling that specialized expertise is required for certain assignments
- Encourages the elected leaders of the Council to cooperatively work as a group
- Gives each leadership team member an opportunity to learn and use different skills and personal strengths
- Offers better representation from all residents from all home areas
- Increases individual confidence to try new things as part of a team

#### SHARED LEADERSHIP IS INCLUSIVE

This model of leadership can include all residents. As increasing numbers of residents are experiencing cognitive changes, the shared leadership model allows more residents to participate in meaningful ways based on their interests and adapted to their current abilities.

If your Residents' Council is thinking of changing or enhancing their leadership structure you may wish to consider the Shared Leadership Team Model.

## STEP 1: DISCUSS and EXAMINE OPTIONS

Request that the Residents' Council form a working group to review different governance structures or plan to dedicate time on an upcoming Council meeting agenda for discussion on this subject. Refer to OARC's Resource Guide, "Supporting Your Home's Residents' Council" (Section 2, pages 70-71) for examples of governance structures, including the Shared Leadership Team Model.

## STEP 2: DECIDE ON THE TRIAL PERIOD

Once you have decided on a leadership model, bring it to the next Residents' Council meeting for approval from the residents for a trial period. Decide when and for how long the Council would like to try the new model. For least disruption, consider a trial period at Residents' Council election time. Consider a 3-4 month trial period at a minimum to be able to evaluate the change

## STEP 3: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL RESIDENT LEADERS

If your Council has agreed to trial the Shared Leadership Team Model, you will need to start identifying potential resident leaders to form your new leadership team. Residents that are currently serving as elected leaders (ex. President, Secretary etc.) or Home Area Representatives may be considered. As a Council, you will need to decide how many resident leaders will make up this new team (possibly 4-8 residents). Next, you will need to ask for nominations or volunteers from throughout the home to best represent perspectives from every floor/home area. Consider using posters, newsletter articles and word of mouth.

## STEP 4: DETERMINE IF AN ELECTION IS NECESSARY

The number of nominated leaders may determine whether a formal election is needed. For example, if the Council has decided that the leadership team will consist of 6 people, and 6 people have been nominated, there is an election by acclamation which means that each person is automatically part of the Shared Leadership Team, and no need to vote.

## STEP 5: EVALUATE and UPDATE THE BYLAWS

At the end of the trial period, discuss how the new structure worked. Does it need any modification? When the new leadership structure has been determined and subsequently approved by the Residents' Council, formalize the decision by updating the Councils bylaws. Changes may be needed to the elections process, position descriptions and terms.

# For Residents, By Residents

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