

# Family Councils: How do they influence family involvement in long term care?

## What we've heard from across B.C...

**Facilitators** that create successful Family Councils include:

- **Opportunities to connect and peer support:**

*"[FC is] a time to network with other family members and educate themselves regarding topics such as dementia. Sometimes just to know they aren't alone." (HA130)*

- **Learning opportunities:**

*"We have a wide range of guest speakers covering topics from funeral planning; downsizing; adaptive clothing; palliative pain management; violence in the care home; grief and loss; income taxes; music and memory; loneliness and connection; etc." (HA205)*

- **Constructive attitudes:**

*"We discuss issues & work to problem solve instead of complain." (HA240)*

**Challenges** to initiating and sustaining a Family Council include:

- **Perceived lack of interest :**

*"Family show no interest in having a council despite numerous attempts and offers to help set this up" (HA503)*

- **Lack of understanding of the purpose of Family Council :**

*"There is an image of FC as a place for complaints but that's not what it is." (HA118)*

- **Consistency of family attendance over time:**

*"After the parents of the active family members passed away, there wasn't members who would want to be active anymore in the council." (HA340)*

## About the Study:

Family Councils can help facilitate collective advocacy, participation in facility decision making, and peer support among family members in long-term care (LTC) facilities. The purpose of this study was to describe the prevalence, structure and function of Family Councils within LTC facilities in British Columbia (BC).

## What we did:

Between May and September of 2016 we sent surveys to organizational leaders at 259 facilities across BC. We received 222 completed surveys (response rate of 86%). Of the 222 sites, 151 (68%) have a Family Council and 22 (10%) have a Joint Family and Resident Council.

## A Description of Family Councils in BC :

Of the 151 facilities that have a Family Council it is most common for them to be:

- 51-100 beds in size (N=55, 36%)
- Privately owned (N=63, 42%)
- Located in urban areas (N=131, 87%)
- Accredited (N=127, 84%)

The most frequent characteristics of these\* family councils include:

- Meeting once a month (N=84, 56%)
- Meeting during the week (N=143, 96%)
- Meeting in the afternoon (N=85, 57%)
- Having staff members regularly attend (N=142, 95%)
- Chaired by a staff member (N=86, 58%)
- Having Terms of Reference (N=85, 57%)
- The main focus of meetings are: information sharing (N=147), advocacy (N=123), education (N=118), and networking (N=100)

\*N =149, missing =2