

Date:

Dear Family Member:

_____ wishes to alert you of a new Department of Public Health regulation. Under this new regulation, this facility must honor the requests of family members in the formulation of a Family Council.

Traditionally, a Family Council is an organization run by and for families of nursing home residents who meet monthly. Family members may elect officers to plan and chair meetings, take minutes, and in general, direct the ongoing activity of the group. Although the staff of this facility may lend assistance as the group requests, an effective Family Council is self-determining and organized to meet the needs and interests of that group.

The benefits to family members and the nursing home can be numerous:

- 1 Families get to know other families. Because of their shared experiences, family members can give the kind of support to each other that no one else can.
- 2 Families get to know the long-term care system. Learning more about the long-term care system and the role of the regulatory agencies can relieve much of the anxiety and confusion family members experience.
- 3 Families get to know the nursing home staff and administration. Many councils invite the administrator, social service staff, and department heads to speak at meetings to explain their responsibilities and how their departments operate. If the meetings are conducted in an open, friendly atmosphere, families feel free to ask questions and discuss their concerns.
- 4 Families have input into nursing home decisions. Family Councils can share ideas with staff and administration. The nursing home benefits by having a group of involved individuals they can come to for advice and support. Families, by being part of the decision-making process, are more involved in the lives of their loved ones who live in the home.
- 5 Groups can be more effective than individuals working alone. Many decisions are made in the legislature and elsewhere which affect the lives of nursing home residents and their families. An organized group of family members can influence these decisions by lobbying, letter writing, etc.
- 6 Nursing home residents benefit from increased involvement from families. Discussing what is going on in the home, sharing activities, and working together on various projects can help to draw families and residents closer together.

If you as a family member of this facility wish to create or learn more about Family Councils, please do not hesitate to call a member of the Social Service department.

Sincerely,