
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2022HLTH0214-001642
Nov. 3, 2022

Ministry of Health

Residents, family will have stronger voices in long-term care homes

VICTORIA – People living in long-term care (LTC) homes will have more input into issues that affect their daily lives as the result of changes to resident and family councils.

“Long-term care residences are people’s homes and it’s important that residents and family members have a place to share concerns and ideas when it comes to decisions about how the homes are operating,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “The Province is strengthening support and oversight of resident and family councils, and encouraging LTC homes currently without a council to establish one to ensure greater voices for residents and their families in decisions that affect them and their loved ones personally.”

A resident and family council is a group of people that meets regularly to promote the collective interests of residents, and to discuss issues of concern. Councils may include residents, family members and other representatives who act on behalf of residents.

The goal of improving the councils is to ensure a greater voice for residents and their families, and to strengthen the partnerships between the councils, the Ministry of Health, health authorities and operators by ensuring opportunities for increased communication and collaboration exist within all long-term care facilities.

The revised regulations will ensure members have more access to information and can have frank conversations about their experiences.

“The pandemic has had a huge impact on residents in LTC homes and their families. As a government, we have learned a lot and have also taken crucial steps to making sure residents in LTC homes have the best quality of life possible and are safe,” said Mable Elmore, Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors’ Services and Long-Term Care. “I want to thank the community groups, including the Independent Long-Term Care Councils Association of BC (formerly known as the Family Council of BC) and the existing regional family councils that have been eagerly and passionately working with the Ministry of Health to assist in establishing and maintaining effective family councils in every long-term care home in our province. The changes we are proposing will achieve exactly that. Councils will be more active when given more administrative support from management and they will have greater representation at the local, regional and provincial levels to affect change. This will lead to a better outcome for all.”

Health authorities will oversee the formation of new regional resident family councils with representation from individual councils who will come together to discuss systemic issues and share information. Additionally, the Ministry of Health will lead a provincial committee with representation from the regional networks to focus on addressing provincial-level issues.

Regional councils and the provincial committee will begin meeting in spring 2023.

Two backgrounders follow.

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Communications

250 952-1887 (media line)

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BACKGROUND 1

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What people are saying about changes to resident, family councils

Nola Galloway, president, Independent Long-Term Care Councils Association of BC –

“On behalf of the Independent Long-Term Care Councils Association of BC, an independent provincial association comprised of its member associations in each region of B.C., we express our gratitude to the Ministry of Health for strengthening councils by guaranteeing residents and their families a voice in matters that affect them. You have created avenues for residents and their families to elevate their collective voice to be addressed by the long-term care home operator, the health authority and the Ministry of Health. We look forward to working with the Ministry of Health as a valued and essential stakeholder in the long-term care sector.”

Edna Sandoval, chair, Fraser Association of Family Councils –

“We have long been waiting for changes to the long-term care program that would enable better care for our loved ones, and for the necessary access to proper channels of communication to the authorities in charge of these changes in care homes. Hopefully, the flow of communication and changes will move faster and with more clarity.”

Heather Stuckey, chair, Interior Association of Family Council –

“Independent Long-Term Care Councils Association of BC and our regional family council groups, like many others, have been advocating for strengthening the role of family councils. We are delighted and wish to congratulate Minister Dix, Parliamentary Secretary Mable Elmore and seniors’ advocate Isobel Mackenzie for their roles in this initiative to strengthen the connection of communication giving long-term care residents and their families an improved voice and greater autonomy in decisions affecting them and their homes.”

Mavis Nelson, chair, Northern Association of Family Councils –

“The Northern Association of Family Councils thanks the Ministry of Health for its revised regulation changes that will give families an enhanced role as an essential voice in long-term care.”

Lisa Dawson, chair, Vancouver Coastal Association of Family Councils –

“Vancouver Coastal Association of Family Councils (VCAFC) expresses our gratitude to the Ministry of Health. This recent enhancement to the long-term care regulations will help build a formal and positive relationship between family caregivers and friends of residents and long-term care leadership. At the regional level, VCAFC looks forward to this mechanism for systemic issues and creative solutions to be shared with our health authority. Also, we look forward to collaborating with long-term care facility operators to inform and support the establishment of

family councils where requested.”

Marcy Johnsrude, chair, Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils –

“Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils would like to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Health for creating more opportunities for residents in long-term care (and their families) to have a greater voice in all aspects of their lives. We look forward to being part of the enhanced collaboration between all of the parties concerned: residents and their families, health authorities, Ministry of Health and care-home operators and managers.”

Kim Slater, founder of Family Councils of BC, founder and past chair of Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils –

“Congratulations and sincere thanks to the Ministry of Health for moving to empower the voice of the very people experiencing long-term care. Having that community voice included in policy decisions alongside other stakeholders in long-term care will be of tremendous benefit to residents. I look forward to seeing that collective voice help residents all across the province.”

Isobel Mackenzie, B.C. seniors advocate –

“These changes will give residents of long-term care, and the people who love them, a much stronger voice in shaping the quality of life for our most frail seniors. It is an extremely positive step forward.”

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BACKGROUND 2

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About the changes to resident and family councils

Long-term care (LTC) homes can be licensed under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act, the Hospital Act or under both acts.

Government will strengthen support for individual councils through a number of measures, including requiring care-home operators or licensees to meet with a council twice a year or more frequently as required to promote the collective interests of persons in care.

Through regulations, government will ensure resident and family councils are able to meet without operators if preferred.

The goal is to ensure council members are supported to have honest, open discussions.

Care-home operators will be required to provide, without cost, administrative support of an employee who is approved by the council for the council meeting.

Care-home operators will be required to provide access to a meeting room on the premises for up to three hours and equipment for the council meeting.

Licensee of LTC homes will be required to respond in writing to all recommendations brought forward by the resident and family councils.

The Ministry of Health is developing improved information resources for resident and family council members.

The Ministry of Health will also provide a description of the council roles and responsibilities with focus on education, knowledge sharing, understanding residents' rights and discussing best practices and systemic issues that are of interest to residents and their families to enhance quality of life for residents.

Operators/licensees will be obligated to share information from the Ministry of Health and the seniors advocate with members of the resident and family councils.

Each health authority will be required to establish regional resident and family councils that will be co-chaired by a representative from the LTC council chairs and the health authority.

The purpose of the regional council is to identify challenges and best practices at the local resident and family council level.

The Ministry of Health will lead a provincial committee with representation from the regional networks to focus on addressing broad systemic or provincial-level issues, developing solutions for them and, therefore, enhancing the quality of life of people living in long-term care homes.

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