

Proposal for the Creation of a Family Council at The Ghaza's Retirement Home

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Abstract

Background: Long-term care facilities frequently encounter challenges related to communication and collaboration between staff and families of residents. At Ghaza's Retainment Home in Bichi, Kano State, Nigeria, this gap has contributed to reduced family engagement and unmet expectations regarding resident care. To address these issues, a Family Council is proposed as a structured platform for families to actively participate in decision-making, provide feedback, and support resident well-being through collaborative initiatives and open dialogue with facility staff.

Methods and Materials: The project adopted a qualitative, participatory action approach. It included a comprehensive literature review on family councils and family engagement in eldercare settings. Primary data collection involved surveys and structured interviews with family members and facility staff to assess needs and expectations. Organizational tools such as meeting agendas, roles (e.g., chairperson, secretary), and operational guidelines were developed to ensure Council effectiveness. Regular council meetings, feedback forms, and newsletters were planned to maintain engagement and measure outcomes. Research also incorporated culturally relevant practices suited to the Nigerian healthcare and community context.

Results: The initiative successfully outlined the framework for establishing a Family Council at Ghaza's Retainment Home, with strong initial support from management and families. Key outcomes include improved communication channels, structured meeting plans, and identification of resident care areas needing attention. Families expressed enthusiasm for participating in care-related decisions, and staff welcomed the opportunity to receive direct feedback. Plans for ongoing meetings, event planning, and documentation practices have been established, setting the stage for sustainable operation and replication.

Conclusion: Creating a Family Council at Ghaza's Retainment Home has the potential to transform family-facility relationships by fostering trust, transparency, and collaborative care. The structured involvement of families will enhance the emotional and physical well-being of residents and strengthen community ties. This model not only addresses current challenges within the facility but also provides a replicable framework for other long-term care institutions aiming to improve care quality through family engagement.

Keywords: *Family Engagement, Long-Term Care, Family Council, Resident-Centered Care, Healthcare Communication*

Purpose:

The purpose of establishing a Family Council at **The Ghaza's Retirement Home** is to strengthen the relationship between the families of residents and the facility's leadership. The Council will act as a collaborative platform for families to share feedback, voice concerns, and discuss strategies to enhance resident care and engagement. A key goal will also be to plan special days where families can actively participate in the care experience, such as dedicated "Family Days" where children and relatives can meet their loved ones.

Objective:

- To improve communication and transparency between families and the facility's management.
- To involve families directly in the development of activities and initiatives that improve the quality of life for residents.
- To ensure that the care provided aligns with the needs and expectations of both the residents and their families.
- To create a sense of community and belonging for families through special events and activities.

Structure and Composition of the Family Council:

The Family Council will consist of:

● **Family Representatives:**

- A representative from each resident family who will volunteer to participate in the Council.
- These representatives will serve as liaisons between the larger family community and the facility management.
- Family representatives will serve for 6–12 months and may be re-elected for subsequent terms.

● **Facility Management Representatives:**

- Doctors: A rotating group of doctors who conduct regular checkups for residents will be invited to participate and provide medical insights during meetings.
- Nurses: The nursing staff who care for the residents daily will attend, ensuring that the care team's perspectives are included.
- Activities Coordinators: The staff responsible for planning resident activities will participate to ensure family members can provide input on programs and events.

Structure of the Family Council

Council Members:

- The Council will consist of family members of residents at The Ghazas Retirement Home.
- Membership will be open to all families, with the option for self-nomination or a selection process.
- Ideally, a diverse group of family members (across age groups, backgrounds, etc.) will represent the various needs of the resident population.

Leadership & Roles:

Chairperson: A family member selected to lead Council meetings by preparing agendas, facilitating discussions, ensuring everyone is heard, and serving as the main point of contact between the Council and facility management.

Secretary: Responsible for recording accurate meeting minutes, organizing Council records, monitoring completion of action items, and distributing communications such as meeting reminders and summaries to members.

Committee Leaders: Lead designated committees focused on areas like activities, fundraising, or event planning by coordinating group tasks, reporting progress at meetings, and ensuring goals are met.

Frequency of Meetings:

- Monthly or quarterly meetings, depending on the needs and preferences of the Council members.
- Extra meetings can be held as necessary to address urgent issues or plan specific events.

Initial Council Meeting Agenda

Welcome & Introductions

- Brief introduction of the Family Council concept.
- Overview of the meeting agenda and what to expect from future meetings.

Facility Management Introduction

- The executive management team shares a summary of the facility's operations and commitment to working with families.
- Outline the vision for the Family Council and how it aligns with the facility's goals.

Council Member Introductions

- Each family member introduces themselves, shares the name of their loved one, and provides any initial ideas or concerns they have.

Open Discussion

- Give families a chance to voice concerns, ask questions, and share feedback. Focus on constructive dialogue and solutions-oriented conversations.

Planning for Family Days and Special Events

Discuss concrete plans and timelines for upcoming "Family Days" and other engagement activities.

Future Council Goals

Set actionable short-term goals, such as confirming event dates or forming event-planning groups. Decide on a schedule for ongoing meetings.

Wrap-Up & Next Steps

Summarize the meeting's discussions, outline next steps, and provide contact details for further questions or feedback.

Ongoing Engagement and Communication

Regular Updates:

- Email newsletters or digital updates will be sent regularly to all family members, summarizing meeting outcomes, upcoming events, and any new initiatives.

Feedback Loop:

- Family members can submit questions or concerns via email or a suggestion box, ensuring ongoing dialogue between meetings.

Post-Meeting Follow-Up:

- After each meeting, the Council will send out a summary of decisions and action items, so families remain informed and can follow up as needed.

Next Steps

- **Recruitment of Council Members:**

Begin reaching out to family members to invite them to join the Council, whether through direct outreach or an informational session.

- **Promote the First Meeting:**

Create flyers or emails to publicize the first Family Council meeting, outlining the purpose and benefits of joining.

Section 2: Project Setting

The setting for my Capstone project is *Ghaza's Retainment Home*, located in Bichi Local Government, Kano State, Nigeria. Ghaza's Retainment Home is a residential care facility that offers a range of services to support individuals who require specialized care, whether due to age, medical conditions, or other factors. The facility's mission is to provide high-quality, compassionate care to its residents, ensuring their comfort, dignity, and well-being.

The Family Council will bridge the gap between Ghaza's Retainment Home's management and residents' families, fostering improved communication and collaboration among family members, staff, and management to ensure the care provided meets families' expectations.

Key Parties Involved:

Families of Residents: Family members will play a central role, providing insight into care needs and improving communication with the facility. **Executive Management and Staff:** Management will attend meetings to address concerns, give updates, and support family engagement.

Community Organizations: The council may collaborate with local groups to support families and residents.

In this project, I will primarily focus on organizational and interpersonal dynamics, including communication between family members and the facility. The project will also involve research on the best practices for developing and maintaining family councils in healthcare settings, with particular attention to the cultural context of Bichi Local Government and the broader Nigerian community.

Research Materials and Methods:

The project will require researching existing family council models, particularly in healthcare facilities, and exploring relevant academic literature on family involvement in eldercare and residential facilities. I will also gather insights from staff, residents' families, and management through interviews, surveys, and observational methods to ensure the Family Council addresses the unique needs of Ghaza's Retainment Home.

Section 3: Project Relevance and Rationale

The establishment of a Family Council at *Ghaza's Retainment Home* is both a vital need and an excellent opportunity to improve the quality of care and communication within the facility. This project not only addresses significant challenges within the setting but also aligns closely with my academic background and professional goals, making it an ideal Capstone project.

Why This Project is Needed:

1. **Enhancing Communication Between Families and Facility Management.** In healthcare facilities, especially those that cater to long-term care residents, communication between family members and management is often limited, which can lead to misunderstandings, concerns, and unmet needs. The creation of a Family Council at Ghaza's Retainment Home will provide a structured platform for families to express their concerns, offer suggestions, and actively participate in decisions affecting their loved ones' care. This initiative will break down barriers of communication and foster a more transparent relationship between the facility and the families.
2. **Improving Care Through Family Involvement:** Research has shown that involving family members in the care process can significantly improve the quality of life for residents in long-term care settings. When families feel empowered and informed, they are more likely to advocate for the well-being of their loved ones, thereby encouraging the facility to maintain high standards of care. Additionally, regular family meetings will help the staff gain valuable insights into the individual needs and preferences of residents that may not be immediately apparent.
3. **Addressing Gaps in Existing Services:** Although Ghaza's Retainment Home has a dedicated team providing care to residents, there is an identified need for improved family engagement. Through informal conversations with families and staff, it has become clear that many families feel disconnected from the day-to-day operations of the facility. The Family Council will bridge this gap by providing families with an official channel through which they can discuss their concerns, learn about new developments at the facility, and collaborate with staff on improving care practices.
4. **Promoting a Supportive Community for Families:** The emotional and psychological stress experienced by families caring for loved ones in residential care is often

overlooked. A Family Council will foster a sense of community among family members, enabling them to support one another, share experiences, and form connections with others facing similar challenges. This support network can help alleviate feelings of isolation and foster a stronger, more connected group of family advocates.

Why This Project is Relevant to My Education:

This project is deeply relevant to my educational journey, particularly in the fields of communication, healthcare management, and community development.

Throughout my studies, I have emphasized the importance of clear and empathetic communication, especially in healthcare settings. This Capstone project will allow me to apply my skills in intercultural communication, small group dynamics, and organizational development to a real-world scenario.

The process of developing and organizing a Family Council will involve several aspects of my academic training:

- **Interpersonal and Small Group Communication:** As I work with family members, staff, and management, I will draw on the communication theories and techniques I've learned to ensure that discussions are respectful, productive, and goal-oriented.
- **Leadership and Facilitation Skills:** I will lead the planning and implementation of the Family Council, honing my leadership abilities as I facilitate discussions and manage diverse viewpoints.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Given the cultural diversity within the local community, understanding and addressing cultural sensitivities will be critical in developing an inclusive and respectful environment for all participants.

Additionally, my background in healthcare-related courses will enable me to understand the needs of residents, particularly in terms of their medical, emotional, and social well-being.

Organizing this Family Council will not only enhance the quality of care at Ghaza's Retainment Home but also contribute to my growth as a future healthcare professional.

Personal Reflection:

On a personal level, I have witnessed the struggles and frustrations of families whose loved ones are in long-term care. The lack of clear communication can often lead to feelings of helplessness and disconnection. This project offers me the opportunity to make a tangible impact in an area that I am passionate about: enhancing the lives of residents and their families through improved communication and increased involvement. Moreover, it aligns with my long-term goal of working in healthcare management or patient advocacy, where facilitating collaboration between families and healthcare providers is key to improving patient outcomes.

Section 4: Project Objectives

The main objectives of this project are as follows:

1. **Establish the Family Council:** To gain formal approval and support from the management for the establishment of the Family Council and to organize the first official meeting with at least 5-10 family members and 3-5 staff members in attendance.

2. **Foster Communication:** To create a structured platform for communication between the families of residents and facility management, promoting ongoing dialogue to improve care quality. This will involve at least one meeting per quarter, in addition to the initial meeting.
3. **Identify Areas for Improvement:** To identify at least three specific aspects of resident care that could benefit from more family involvement, whether it's in the form of additional support, improved activities, or addressing unmet care needs.
4. **Build Family Engagement:** To increase family involvement in resident care and encourage them to be advocates for their loved ones' well-being. I aim to engage at least 10 family members in the council's formation and activities.
5. **Promote Education for Families:** To educate the families on how they can improve the quality of care for their loved ones and to provide them with a forum to voice concerns and share ideas. Feedback from at least 80% of family members in attendance will be collected and analyzed to measure the effectiveness of this goal.
6. **Develop a Sustainable Model:** To create a working model for the Family Council that can be replicated by other care facilities within the region. This will include drafting guidelines and procedures for how the council operates, which can be shared with other facilities.

Section 5: Project Methodology

The methodology for this project involves a step-by-step approach to establishing the Family Council and ensuring its sustainability. The key steps include:

1. Initial Approval and Support:

I will seek formal approval from the management of Ghaza's Retainment Home to establish the Family Council. This involves meeting with a senior management and presenting the objectives, benefits, and structure of the Family Council.

2. Family Recruitment and Meeting Organization:

I will recruit family members of the residents to participate in the council, ensuring a diverse representation of residents' families. The initial meeting will be planned, including selecting a venue, preparing invitations, and organizing materials (e.g., agenda, information packets).

3. Council Meetings:

I will facilitate the first meeting by introducing the concept of the Family Council, discussing its benefits, and setting expectations for future meetings. The meetings will be structured with a clear agenda and will focus on fostering open communication, identifying concerns, and proposing solutions.

4. Identification of Resident Care Areas:

During the meetings, I will encourage families to provide input on specific areas of resident care that need attention. I will document these concerns and work with the facility's management team to address them.

5. Feedback and Evaluation:

After each meeting, I will distribute feedback forms to all attendees, which will include questions on the meeting's effectiveness, communication clarity, and overall satisfaction. This feedback will be used to refine the Family Council process.

6. Development of Guidelines for Sustainability:

As the Family Council expands, I will establish a set of operational guidelines for future meetings, including roles and responsibilities for council members, decision-making processes, and established communication channels. This will serve as a blueprint for other facilities looking to implement similar councils.

Section 6: Project Research Methods

The following research methods will be employed to ensure the success of the Family Council:

1. Research on Family Councils in Long-Term Care Facilities:

I will conduct a literature review of articles, journals, and case studies about Family Councils in long-term care settings. This will provide a framework for how such councils operate and establish best practices.

2. Interviews with Facility Management:

I will interview key staff members at Ghaza's Retainment Home, including the facility manager, resident care directors, and other key staff, to understand their perspectives on family involvement and identify potential areas for improvement.

3. Surveys and Feedback from Family Members:

A survey will be conducted with families of residents to understand their needs, expectations, and willingness to participate in the council. This survey will help tailor the Family Council's structure to best serve the families' needs.

4. Consultation with Experts in Healthcare and Family Councils:

I will seek advice from experts in healthcare management and family involvement to ensure that the Family Council is structured in a way that maximizes its impact. This may involve consultations with external consultants or advisors who specialize in family engagement in healthcare.

5. Evaluation of Community Resources:

I will research community organizations and other care facilities to gather insights into how family councils have been successfully implemented in other settings. This research will be vital in shaping the council's operation and sustainability.

6. Annotated Bibliography:

I will compile an annotated list of at least 10 sources, including academic journals, books, and websites, all of which are relevant to family engagement and healthcare management, and the implementation of family councils in long-term care facilities.

Section 7: Project Timetable

This section outlines the **detailed, week-by-week plan** for executing the Family Council project at Ghaza's *Retainment Home*. The timeline includes essential tasks, milestones, and deadlines, ensuring that the project is implemented effectively and efficiently. Each phase of the project has been designed to promote engagement, smooth implementation, and continual evaluation of outcomes.

Week 1: Initial Preparation and Approval

Task 1: Finalize the Project Proposal - Review and finalize the project proposal document, ensuring all sections are coherent and aligned with the goals of establishing the Family Council. This includes double-checking APA format, structure, and content. Once complete, submit it to Ghaza's Retainment Home management for approval.

Task 2: Present Proposal to Management: Schedule a formal meeting with key facility stakeholders, including the facility manager and department heads, to present the project proposal. This presentation will focus on explaining the need for the Family Council, the benefits it offers to the facility and its families, and how the project will be implemented. It will also provide an opportunity to address any questions or concerns they may have.

Task 3: Recruit Initial Family Members - Begin reaching out to the families of residents to gauge their interest in participating in the Family Council. This will involve sending personalized emails or making phone calls to explain the purpose of the council and its potential impact on the care process. ● Task 4: Establish Communication Channels: Set up a dedicated communication channel for Family Council members, such as a private email list, group chat, or communication platform. This will help ensure consistent communication and easy access for future updates and meetings.

Milestone: Obtain formal approval from management and initiate the recruitment process for family members.

Week 2: Research and Resource Preparation

Task 1: Conduct In-Depth Research: Perform thorough research on existing family councils in similar long-term care facilities, focusing on their structure, best practices, and lessons learned. This will help in shaping the Family Council's format to ensure its success. Look for academic studies, reports from reputable healthcare organizations, and case studies from credible sources.

Task 2: Develop Meeting Materials: Begin designing materials for the first meeting. These will include the meeting agenda, information packets, and introductory documents outlining the Family Council's mission, roles, and goals. Prepare a welcome packet for attendees, which could include information about Ghaza's Retainment Home's operations, staff introductions, and the Family Council's anticipated role.

Task 3: Finalize Family Member Recruitment: Continue reaching out to family members to finalize the guest list for the first meeting. Aim for at least 5-10 attendees, ensuring a good

representation of residents' families. Offer flexible meeting times or virtual participation options for those who may have scheduling conflicts.

Task 4: Coordinate with Management and Staff: Confirm the involvement of key staff members (e.g., nursing supervisors, facility management, and resident care directors) who will participate in the meetings. Clarify their roles and expectations, ensuring they understand the importance of their presence in fostering open communication.

Milestone: Complete research and have all meeting materials ready for the first meeting.

Week 3: Finalizing Logistics for First Meeting

Task 1: Confirm Meeting Date and Time: Coordinate with family members and staff to confirm the date and time for the first Family Council meeting. Ensure that the time is suitable for most participants and that management and key staff are available to attend.

Task 2: Organize Meeting Venue: Confirm the venue for the Family Council meeting, ensuring it is spacious, accessible, and conducive to group discussions. Arrange the necessary resources, including seating, projectors, microphones, and printed materials.

Task 3: Send Invitations and Reminders: Distribute formal invitations to family members, staff, and management. Include details such as the meeting agenda, location, and key objectives. Send reminders one to two days before the meeting to ensure full participation.

Task 4: Prepare for Virtual Attendance: For family members who are unable to attend in person, set up a virtual meeting option using platforms like Zoom or Google Meet. Ensure that all technical equipment is tested and that virtual attendees can interact smoothly during the meeting.

Milestone: Confirm attendance and finalize all logistics for the first meeting to ensure a smooth experience for all participants.

Week 4: Family Council First Meeting

Task 1: Facilitate the First Meeting: As the Family Council coordinator, I will facilitate the first meeting by introducing the project, outlining the goals of the Family Council, and explaining its operational structure. This will include setting expectations for future meetings, defining roles, and discussing how feedback will be collected and acted upon.

Task 2: Gather Input on Resident Care: During the meeting, encourage family members to voice their concerns, suggestions, and observations regarding the care of their loved ones. Take detailed notes and ensure that all feedback is documented for later review.

Task 3: Provide Clear Communication on Next Steps: Outline the next steps in the process, including future meeting schedules, how decisions will be made, and how family members can stay engaged. Provide a schedule for the next meeting and a plan for following up with families.

Task 4: Document Meeting Proceedings: Keep detailed minutes of the meeting, including all family feedback, suggestions for improvement, and any action items discussed. These will be shared with all participants and used to inform future meetings and decisions.

Milestone: Hold the first Family Council meeting, gathering input from family members and staff on various aspects of resident care.

Week 5: Feedback Collection and Evaluation

Task 1: Distribute Feedback Surveys: After the meeting, distribute feedback surveys to all participants, asking for their opinions on the meeting's effectiveness, clarity of communication, and suggestions for improvement.

Task 2: Analyze Survey Results - Review the feedback from the surveys to identify key areas for improvement or issues that require immediate attention. Look for recurring themes in the feedback and prioritize them for discussion in future meetings.

Task 3: Follow-up with Non-Respondents: Contact any family members who didn't complete the feedback survey to gather their input. This will ensure that the Family Council reflects the voices of all families involved.

Task 4: Prepare Evaluation Report - Prepare a concise evaluation report that summarizes the feedback from the first meeting and the results of the surveys. Share the findings with management and staff, along with any necessary adjustments.

Milestone: Complete feedback analysis and adjust the Family Council structure based on suggestions.

Week 6: Development of Operational Guidelines

Task 1: Draft Operational Guidelines - Based on feedback and the outcomes of the first meeting, develop a comprehensive set of guidelines for the Family Council. This will include procedures for future meetings, roles and responsibilities of members, and a clear decision-making process.

Task 2: Share Guidelines with Stakeholders: Share the draft guidelines with management and staff for review. Incorporate any changes or suggestions from them before finalizing the document.

Task 3: Finalize Meeting Agenda for Next Meeting: Create the agenda for the next Family Council meeting, incorporating any new issues or concerns that arose during the first meeting.

Task 4: Ensure Participation from All Family Members: Continue efforts to recruit additional family members to participate in the council, ensuring that the group remains representative of all residents.

Milestone: Complete operational guidelines and begin preparing for the second meeting.

Week 7: Continuous Engagement and Planning for Next Meeting

Task 1: Follow Up with Management: Meet with the facility's management team to review the Family Council's progress and discuss any necessary adjustments. Focus on resolving issues raised by family members in the first meeting.

Task 2: Plan Future Initiatives - Begin discussing future initiatives for the Family Council, such as enhancing resident care services or organizing community outreach programs for families.

Task 3: Set Meeting Agenda - Prepare an agenda for the second Family Council meeting, ensuring it addresses the feedback received from the first meeting.

Milestone: Ensure continued engagement and collaboration between families and management.

Week 8: Final Evaluation and Sustainability

Task 1: Host a Second Family Council Meeting - Implement improvements based on feedback from the first meeting. Discuss long-term goals for the Family Council and identify any new concerns or priorities that have arisen.

Task 2: Finalize and Distribute Family Council Guidelines: Complete the final version of the guidelines and distribute them to all participants. Ensure that the guidelines are accessible and understood by everyone involved.

Task 3: Evaluate the Success of the Project: Conduct a final evaluation of the Family effectiveness, including a survey to assess whether the council has met its objectives of improving communication and care quality.

Task 4: Prepare Final Report: Prepare a detailed report summarizing the project's results, including feedback from participants, improvements made, and recommendations for future expansion of the Family Council.

Milestone: **Distribute finalized guidelines** and complete the final project report.

Results

The creation of a Family Council at The Ghazas Retirement Home aims to foster an improved relationship between the facility's management and the families of residents. This initiative has been designed to:

1. Increase Communication and Transparency:

The Family Council will provide families with regular and direct access to facility leadership, thus improving transparency regarding resident care, policies, and activities. Families will have a structured platform to raise concerns, ask questions, and receive updates on the well-being of their loved ones.

2. Promote Family Involvement in Resident Care:

By engaging families in the planning and execution of resident activities, the Council will empower them to contribute to initiatives that positively impact the lives of the residents. This involvement will not only enhance the quality of life for residents but also foster stronger bonds among families, residents, and staff.

3. Strengthen Community and Support:

The Family Council will serve as a space for families to interact with one another, share experiences, and offer mutual support. Special events, such as "Family Days," will encourage families to participate actively in the residents' lives, fostering a sense of community and belonging. This is essential for maintaining the emotional well-being of residents.

4. Establish a Feedback Loop for Continuous Improvement:

The Council will provide a consistent avenue for families to voice their feedback, which will then be reviewed by the facility's management. This ongoing dialogue ensures that the care provided at The Ghazas Retirement Home aligns with family expectations and the evolving needs of residents.

Potential for Financial Sustainability and Resource Allocation:

In the long term, the Family Council could play a role in raising funds for specific needs or projects within the facility. Through partnerships, fundraising initiatives, or advocacy, the Council could contribute to the financial sustainability of the facility, allowing it to enhance services and activities for residents.

Discussion

Organizing a Family Council at Ghaza's Retainment Home

The development of a **Family Council** at *Ghaza's Retainment Home* aims to improve communication, enhance family involvement, and ultimately raise the quality of care for residents. By establishing a formal platform for families to share concerns and suggestions, the project fosters transparency between families and facility management, ensuring that families are actively engaged in the care process.

The **impact on families** includes providing a space for them to voice their concerns and collaborate with the staff, which can alleviate feelings of frustration and increase satisfaction.

For **facility management**, the council offers valuable information, insights into areas of care that may need improvement, promoting a more responsive environment.

One of the **key benefits** is the improvement in **resident care**, as family involvement can lead to more personalized care plans, better observation of residents' needs, and quicker responses to concerns. However, challenges such as family reluctance and staff resistance to the council may arise. Overcoming these will require clear communication about the benefits and the development of strategies to encourage participation.

The **sustainability** of the council depends on creating a structured, well-supported system with regular evaluations and feedback loops. This project could serve as a model for other long-term care facilities, providing a template for establishing similar councils that enhance family engagement and care throughout the sector.

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