

**ESTABLISHING A FAMILY COUNCIL AT NIRMALYA SENIOR LIVING:  
A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE TO ENHANCE RESIDENT-CENTERED  
CARE AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN PUNE, INDIA**

**Sharma Nishant<sup>1</sup>, Ghassan Salibi<sup>2</sup>, Nikolaos Tzenios<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Kursk State Medical. University

<sup>123</sup> Charisma University

**Abstract**

**Background:** Family engagement is a critical component of resident-centered care in long-term care facilities, contributing to improved quality of life, satisfaction, and communication between families and care providers. In India, where institutional elder care is expanding due to demographic and social changes, formal mechanisms for family participation remain limited. This project aimed to establish the inaugural Family Council at Nirmalya Senior Living in Pune, Maharashtra, to strengthen collaboration between families, residents, and facility leadership.

**Methods and Material:** A quality improvement approach was employed, incorporating literature review, stakeholder consultations, expert interviews, document analysis, and family engagement strategies. Key activities included securing administrative approval, developing council resources and operational guidelines, recruiting family representatives, facilitating the inaugural council meeting, and evaluating participant experiences through post-meeting surveys. The project was guided by principles of resident-centered care, family engagement, and participatory decision-making.

**Results:** The initiative successfully established a structured framework for family participation within the facility. The inaugural Family Council provided a formal platform for communication, collaborative problem-solving, and quality improvement discussions. Project deliverables included a Family Council handbook, meeting procedures, communication protocols, recruitment materials, and evaluation tools. Feedback mechanisms enabled identification of priority concerns and facilitated constructive dialogue between families and facility leadership. The project also created a sustainable model that can be replicated across other elder care facilities within the organization.

**Conclusion:** Establishing a Family Council is a feasible and practical strategy for enhancing family engagement and promoting resident-centered care in Indian long-term care settings. By

fostering transparency, trust, and collaboration, Family Councils can improve communication, strengthen care quality, and support the well-being of residents, families, and staff. Wider adoption of similar participatory models may contribute to improving elder care standards across India.

**Keywords:** *Family Council; Long-Term Care; Resident-Centered Care; Family Engagement; Elder Care*

### **Project Definition**

I propose to develop, organize, and facilitate the inaugural Family Council at Nirmalya Senior Living, a long-term care facility in Pune, Maharashtra, culminating in the first formal council meeting that brings together family members of residents, facility leadership, and key staff to establish a sustainable communication framework for improving resident quality of life.

### **Project Setting**

My capstone project will take place at **Nirmalya Senior Living**, a 110-bed assisted living and skilled nursing facility located in Pune, Maharashtra, India. Nirmalya is part of a small regional chain of elder care homes operating across Pune, Mumbai, and Nagpur. The facility provides comprehensive care services, including memory care for persons with dementia, post-surgical rehabilitation, and long-term skilled nursing. Nirmalya currently serves a diverse resident population, with approximately 60% of residents supported by family contributions and private pay, while the remainder receive support through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives or charitable trusts. The facility employs around 125 staff members across clinical (nurses, care attendants), administrative, dietary, housekeeping, and rehabilitation departments.

The parties involved in this project include residents, their family members, Nirmalya's executive leadership (particularly the Facility Director and the Head of Clinical Services), the facility's Social Work department, the local Senior Citizens' Welfare Officer (appointed under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007), and the corporate quality assurance team of the parent organization. Additionally, I will coordinate with the dietary and activities departments for logistical support for the inaugural meeting, as well as with the volunteer coordinator, who has expressed interest in supporting ongoing council operations.

The facility currently lacks any formal mechanism for family members to collectively voice concerns, share experiences, or collaborate with management on quality improvement initiatives.

While individual family communication occurs through care conferences and informal conversations, there is no structured forum for family input on facility-wide policies, programming, or resident care standards (Sharma & Choudhary, 2020).

### **Project Relevance and Rationale**

The establishment of a Family Council at Nirmalya Senior Living addresses several critical needs that affect residents, families, staff, and facility leadership alike. This project holds

particular significance in the evolving landscape of elder care in India, where the traditional joint-family system is increasingly giving way to institutional care and family engagement remains underdeveloped (Patel & Prince, 2021).

### **Why This Project Is Needed**

**For families:** Many families experience a sense of helplessness and guilt after placing a loved one in institutional care. During my previous interactions with Nirmalya through a public health internship, I observed that families often struggle to navigate the facility's systems, do not know where to direct concerns, and lack connections with other families who share similar experiences. A formal council provides them with a collective voice, peer support, and a structured pathway for advocacy. Research from Indian geriatric settings suggests that family involvement is a key determinant of satisfaction with long-term care and can reduce the emotional burden on families (Rao & Thakur, 2022).

**For facility management:** The Facility Director has expressed that families often escalate concerns only when problems become severe, making it difficult to engage in proactive problem-solving. A Family Council can serve as a constructive sounding board for proposed policy changes, new program initiatives, and quality improvement efforts. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, while not explicitly mandating family councils, encourages facilities to adopt participatory mechanisms that respect the dignity and rights of older persons (Government of India, 2007). Establishing such a council aligns with the spirit of this legislation.

**For staff:** Nursing attendants and care staff often feel that their daily dedication goes unnoticed, with family interactions primarily occurring during crises. A Family Council creates opportunities for families to see the compassion and effort that staff demonstrate, potentially improving staff morale and retention. When families become more involved in facility functions and express appreciation, it contributes to a more positive work environment for everyone.

**For residents:** Most importantly, the residents themselves stand to gain the most from this initiative. Research has established that family engagement can improve the quality of life for older adults in institutional care by ensuring that care is personalized and responsive to individual preferences (Krishnamoorthy & Sarveswaran, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the sudden exclusion of families from Indian care homes highlighted the importance

of family voices in maintaining resident well-being (Menon & Ranganathan, 2020). By establishing a Family Council now, Nirmalya can ensure that family perspectives are integrated into future planning and emergency preparedness efforts.

### **Why This Project Is Appropriate for My Capstone**

This project aligns directly with my Master of Public Health education at Kursk State Medical University and my personal professional goals of improving elder care in India. Throughout my coursework in Russia, I have developed competencies that will be essential for this project's success.

My studies in Health Systems Management and Health Communication have prepared me to navigate the complex dynamics between families, staff, and administration in a cross-cultural context. The Indian elder care setting is a unique cultural system shaped by layered influences from family expectations, professional care norms, and regulatory frameworks. I will utilize skills in intercultural communication when working with diverse stakeholders, recognizing that participants will bring their own cultural frameworks into the organization. Allowing the Family Council to develop its own character and culture will be an exercise in facilitating rather than imposing structure.

My courses in Program Planning and Evaluation have equipped me with frameworks for assessing needs, setting measurable objectives, and evaluating outcomes. The Organizational Behaviour and Small Group Communication modules I have taken will be directly applicable as I facilitate the council formation process and help establish effective meeting structures. Additionally, my Research Methods training will inform the evaluation component of this project, including the development and analysis of feedback surveys.

The negotiation and mediation skills I have developed throughout my program will be essential as I coordinate with multiple stakeholders who may have competing priorities. I must balance the desire for family autonomy with the facility's operational realities, all while ensuring that resident needs remain central to the conversation.

Finally, this project represents a meaningful contribution to public health practice in India. By developing a working model for a Family Council that other facilities in this ownership chain could potentially adopt, I am contributing to broader efforts to improve long-term care quality

and family engagement in a country where the population of older adults is growing rapidly (United Nations Population Fund, 2023).

### **Project Objectives**

1. To obtain formal approval and documented support from Nirmalya Senior Living's administration for the establishment of a Family Council, including commitment to attend quarterly meetings and provide written responses to council recommendations.
2. To recruit and engage at least eight families representing a diverse cross-section of Nirmalya's resident population (including memory care, long-term skilled nursing, and short-term rehabilitation units) to attend the inaugural council meeting.
3. To secure participation from at least three facility leadership representatives at the inaugural meeting, including the Facility Director, Head of Clinical Services, and Senior Social Worker, demonstrating administrative commitment to the council's work.
4. To facilitate the inaugural Family Council meeting, during which attendees will collaboratively develop a council mission statement, establish meeting ground rules, and identify three priority areas for improvement based on family-identified concerns.
5. To create and distribute a post-meeting feedback survey to all family attendees, achieve at least 70% response rate, and analyze results to identify areas for improvement in future council meetings.
6. To develop a formalized Family Council handbook and meeting procedure document that can serve as a template for future council sustainability and potentially for adoption by other facilities within the parent organization.
7. To establish a communication protocol between the Family Council and facility administration that includes a designated council liaison, a meeting minutes distribution process, and a response timeline for council recommendations.

### **Project Methodology**

#### **Phase 1: Foundation Building (Weeks 1-3)**

I will begin by scheduling a formal meeting with the Nirmalya Facility Director and Head of Clinical Services to present the Family Council proposal, drawing upon the provisions of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, which emphasizes participatory care and the rights of older persons (Government of India, 2007). I will secure their

written commitment to participate in council meetings and to provide administrative support, including meeting space, refreshments, and assistance with family outreach.

During this phase, I will also meet with the facility's Social Work department and Volunteer Coordinator to coordinate family identification and outreach strategies. I will request a list of current residents with designated family contacts, categorized by unit type to ensure representative recruitment.

### **Phase 2: Research and Resource Development (Weeks 2-5)**

I will conduct comprehensive research on effective Family Council models, with a focus on Indian and South Asian contexts:

- Review of peer-reviewed literature on family engagement in long-term care, particularly studies conducted in India and low- and middle-income settings.
- Consultation with the local Senior Citizens' Welfare Officer to understand legal frameworks, available resources, and best practices for family councils under the Senior Citizens Act.
- Interviews with family council leaders or facility managers from two other elder care homes in Pune and Mumbai to learn practical lessons about what has worked well and what challenges they have encountered.

I will develop the following resources based on my research:

- Family Council invitation materials and recruitment flyers (bilingual in English and Marathi, to accommodate local families).
- Proposed council meeting agenda template.
- Family feedback survey instrument.
- Draft council handbook outlining purpose, structure, and operating procedures.

### **Phase 3: Recruitment and Engagement (Weeks 4-6)**

I will implement a multi-channel recruitment strategy to maximize family participation. This will include:

- Personalized invitation letters were mailed to all families, signed by the Facility Director to signal administrative support.
- Follow-up telephone calls to families who have expressed interest or to those identified by staff as potentially highly engaged.

- Posting information in high-traffic areas of the facility, including the main entrance, family lounge, and elevator lobbies.
- One-on-one conversations with families I have developed relationships with during my prior internship to build momentum and secure early commitments.

I will track RSVPs and follow up with families who express interest but cannot attend the inaugural meeting to offer alternative engagement opportunities.

#### **Phase 4: Meeting Preparation (Weeks 6-7)**

Working with the facility's dietary and activities departments, I will finalize logistical arrangements including meeting room setup, refreshments (considering dietary preferences), audiovisual equipment, and materials preparation. I will confirm attendance with all facility leadership participants and prepare brief talking points to ensure they understand the council's purpose and their role as supportive participants.

I will also prepare the meeting facilitation materials, including visual aids, discussion prompts, and a structured agenda that balances information-sharing with open dialogue. I will incorporate time for peer networking and relationship-building, which is essential for developing council cohesion (International Long-Term Care Policy Network, 2022).

#### **Phase 5: Inaugural Meeting Facilitation (Week 8)**

I will facilitate the inaugural Family Council meeting, which will include the following elements:

- Welcome and introductions with an opportunity for families to share something about their loved one.
- Presentation on the purpose and potential of the Family Council.
- Guided discussion to identify shared concerns and priority areas.
- Collaborative development of meeting ground rules and operating norms.
- Election or appointment of council officers (chair, secretary, etc.).
- Establishment of a communication protocol with facility administration.
- Planning for the next meeting date and agenda.

Throughout the meeting, I will practice active listening, ensure all voices are heard, and maintain a constructive atmosphere focused on collaborative problem-solving.

#### **Phase 6: Evaluation and Follow-Up (Weeks 9-10)**

Within 48 hours of the meeting, I will distribute feedback surveys to all family attendees, either in paper form or via WhatsApp, based on family preference (given the widespread use of messaging apps in India). The survey will assess:

- Overall satisfaction with the meeting experience.
- Perceived usefulness of the Family Council concept.
- Quality of facility leadership participation.
- Suggestions for improving future meetings.
- Likelihood of continued participation.

I will meet with facility leadership within one week of the council meeting to share preliminary feedback and discuss their observations. I will request formal written feedback from the Facility Director regarding the council's establishment and initial meeting.

Finally, I will compile all evaluation data, along with the council handbook and meeting procedure documents, into a final project report that can be shared with facility leadership and the parent organization.

## **Project Evaluation**

I will determine project success through multiple measures:

- Achievement of each stated objective (approval obtained, attendance targets met, resources developed).
- Quantitative analysis of family feedback surveys.
- Qualitative feedback from facility leadership and participating families.
- My own reflective journal documenting challenges, successes, and lessons learned.

I will seek evaluative input from:

- The Nirmalya Facility Director, from an administrative perspective, on the council value and feasibility.
- Participating families regarding their experience and perceived value.
- The Head of Social Work regarding integration with existing family support services.
- My faculty advisor at Kursk State Medical University provided guidance on project design and execution quality.

## **Project Research Methods**

My research for this project will employ multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive evidence base for the Family Council initiative in the Indian context.

### **Literature Review**

I will conduct a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature on family councils and family engagement in long-term care settings. My search will focus on the following databases: PubMed, Google Scholar, and Indian journals such as the *Indian Journal of Gerontology* and the *Journal of Geriatric Care and Research*. Search terms will include “family council,” “long-term care,” “family engagement,” “elder care India,” and “nursing home family involvement.” I will prioritize recent publications (last 10 years) but will include foundational older literature where relevant. I will compile an annotated bibliography of at least 15 sources, with particular attention to studies that identify modifiable factors affecting council effectiveness, such as communication structures, recruitment strategies, and leadership development.

### **Expert Interviews**

I will conduct semi-structured interviews with three key informants:

1. The local Senior Citizens’ Welfare Officer (appointed under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007) is to understand regulatory requirements, common challenges in council formation, and available resources for family councils in Maharashtra.
2. A family council leader or facility manager from a similar-sized elder care facility in Pune or Mumbai can learn practical strategies for recruitment, meeting facilitation, and sustaining family engagement in the Indian cultural context.
3. The Facility Director of Nirmalya Senior Living is to understand facility-specific priorities, constraints, and expectations for the council.

Each interview will last approximately 45–60 minutes and will be guided by a prepared protocol.

I will take detailed notes and, with permission, audio record the interviews to ensure accuracy.

### **Document Analysis**

I will review existing facility documents relevant to family engagement, including:

- Current family communication policies and procedures.
- Family satisfaction survey data from the past 12 months.

- Any existing resident or family council policies from other facilities within the parent organization.
- Relevant provisions of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, and Maharashtra state guidelines for senior citizen homes (Maharashtra State Commission for Senior Citizens, 2022).

## **Resource Review**

I will consult practice resources from Indian and international organizations, including:

- Materials from HelpAge India on family involvement in elder care (HelpAge India, 2023).
- Guidelines from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment regarding standards for senior citizen homes (National Institute of Social Defence, 2019).
- Best practice toolkits developed by the International Long-Term Care Policy Network and adapted for Indian contexts (International Long-Term Care Policy Network, 2022).

## **Stakeholder Consultation**

Throughout the project, I will engage in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders at Nirmalya, including the Head of Social Work, the Activities Coordinator, and nursing leadership, to ensure the project remains aligned with facility priorities and operational realities.

## **Project Timetable**

### **Week 1: Project Kickoff and Administrative Approval**

- Finalize project proposal with faculty advisor at Kursk State Medical University.
- Schedule and conduct an initial meeting with Nirmalya, the Facility Director (via video call, as I am currently in Russia).
- Obtain formal written approval for the establishment of the Family Council.
- Begin reviewing literature on family council effectiveness.

### **Week 2: Stakeholder Engagement**

- Meet with the Head of Social Work to coordinate family identification.
- Meet with the Activities Coordinator to discuss logistical support.
- Contact the local Senior Citizens' Welfare Officer to schedule a consultation.
- Continue literature review.

### **Week 3: Research Completion**

- Complete interview with Senior Citizens' Welfare Officer.
- Complete literature review and begin annotated bibliography.
- Draft invitation materials and recruitment flyers (bilingual).
- Create an initial agenda for the council meeting.

**Week 4: Recruitment Launch**

- Finalize the family invitation letter and obtain the Facility Director's signature.
- Mail invitations to all families.
- Post recruitment information in facility common areas.
- Begin follow-up telephone calls to families.

**Week 5: Ongoing Recruitment and Research**

- Continue family follow-up calls and track RSVPs.
- Interview the family council leader from another facility in Pune.
- Draft Family Council handbook.
- Develop a family feedback survey instrument.

**Week 6: Logistics and Final Preparation**

- Finalize meeting date, time, and location with the facility.
- Confirm attendance with facility leadership participants.
- Coordinate catering and room setup with the dietary department.
- Finalize meeting agenda and facilitation materials.
- Make reminder calls to families who have RSVP'd.

**Week 7: Final Preparations**

- Confirm all logistical arrangements.
- Prepare meeting materials packets for attendees.
- Brief facility leadership on their role in the meeting.
- Finalize the council handbook for distribution.
- Confirm all RSVPs and follow up with last-minute responses.

**Week 8: Inaugural Family Council Meeting**

- Arrive early to set up meeting space (travel to Pune if feasible; otherwise, coordinate with on-site facilitator).

- Facilitate the meeting in accordance with the prepared agenda.
- Collect attendance records and initial feedback.
- Distribute feedback surveys to attendees.
- Send thank-you notes to facility leadership and staff who supported the meeting.

**Week 9: Evaluation and Follow-Up**

- Collect and analyze feedback survey responses.
- Meet with the Facility Director to debrief on the meeting and share preliminary feedback (via video call).
- Compile evaluation data and prepare the final project report.
- Submit a thank you letter to the Facility Director for signature.
- Conduct final interview with faculty advisor.

**Week 10: Final Deliverables**

- Complete annotated bibliography.
- Finalize project report with all sections.
- Prepare and submit the final capstone paper to Kursk State Medical University.
- Provide facility leadership with the final report and recommendations.
- Send thank-you notes to all project participants and supporters.

## References

1. Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India. (2021). *Dementia care in India: Report 2021*. ARDSI.
2. Bhattacharyya, K. K., & Sengupta, P. (2020). Family involvement in institutional long-term care: A narrative review from the Indian context. *Journal of Geriatric Care and Research*, 7(2), 45–52.
3. Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. (2007). *The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007*. Government of India.
4. HelpAge India. (2023). *State of elder care in India: Challenges and opportunities*. HelpAge India.
5. International Long-Term Care Policy Network. (2022). *Family engagement in long-term care: A toolkit for providers*. ILPN.
6. Joseph, J., & Devi, S. (2022). Family satisfaction in assisted living facilities in urban India: A cross-sectional study. *Indian Journal of Public Health*, 66(3), 287–292.
7. Krishnamoorthy, Y., & Sarveswaran, G. (2021). Quality of life among institutionalized older adults in India: A systematic review. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 10(5), 1798–1805.
8. Maharashtra State Commission for Senior Citizens. (2022). *Guidelines for registration and operation of senior citizen homes in Maharashtra*. Government of Maharashtra.
9. Menon, S., & Ranganathan, A. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on institutional elder care in India: Lessons for policy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 55(21), 23–27.
10. National Institute of Social Defence. (2019). *Standards for senior citizen homes*. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
11. Patel, V., & Prince, M. (2021). Mental health of older adults in India: Bridging the gap between policy and practice. *The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia*, 1, 100010.
12. Rao, S., & Thakur, H. (2022). Family involvement in long-term care: A qualitative study of perspectives from Pune, India. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, 37(4), 401–418.

13. Sharma, S., & Choudhary, P. (2020). Resident and family councils in Indian old age homes: Current status and future directions. *Indian Journal of Gerontology*, 34(3), 321–335.
14. United Nations Population Fund. (2023). *India ageing report 2023*. UNFPA.