

Qualicum Manor

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To:
Honourable Adrian Dix, M.L.A.
Minister for Health
Government of British Columbia
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4

May 25, 2018

Dear Minister Dix,

I am writing in support of the recommendations in the document, Proposal for Change – Supporting Residents in Care, and to share an example of the insurmountable barriers that may continue to occur until these recommendations are implemented.

I've been fortunate to enjoy a career with a focus on seniors and residential care, having a series of leadership roles in the BC Health Authority sector, as well as in Affiliate facility settings, which afforded me opportunities to engage with residents and their families. It is my personal practice to foster an open and approachable environment, and I strive to set a high bar for being willing to listen and be open to creative resolution regarding matters of concern to residents and those who support them. A facility manager who takes this approach should be able to play a meaningful role in ensuring the establishment of a Family Council and finding ways to ensure that council has a voice.

However, as in my case, even a well-intentioned facility manager faces constraints in the absence of regulatory language that compels a framework for the creation of family councils that is applicable to all residential facilities.

Several years ago, I was a manager at a mid-island complex care facility with 75 fully funded beds (no relationship to my current workplace). This facility operates as a Not for Profit and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, to whom the management team is accountable. For many years prior to my arrival there had been no family council established at this facility. I endeavoured to lay the groundwork to form one, and enlisted support and advice from the Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils.

To my surprise and disappointment, the proposed framework for establishing a family council at this facility was met with numerous objections and restraints stemming from the Board level.

I was informed that, in the event family members wished to form a family council;

- They would not be permitted to meet on facility property;

- They would receive little or no practical support from the facility;
- The facility would take no action to inform other family members of the existence of a family council, or promote activities and membership in any way;
- Any communication between the proposed family council and facility leadership would be structured in such a way as to pose even more barriers to a collaborative working relationship.

Despite my keen interest and willingness to contribute to the establishment of a collaborative relationship between a potential family council and the leadership team at the facility, I received very clear direction from the governing Board to minimize my involvement and support in this initiative. It was one of the most disappointing and disheartening experiences of my career.

I believe that regulatory support, such as that proposed by the Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils, is required to prevent this scenario from happening in any facility operating in British Columbia. We can do better. By proceeding with this policy measure you can ensure that we do.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wendy Carmichael". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Wendy Carmichael
Director of Care
Qualicum Manor