



Sandra Stimson

# Pathways to the Past



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## Trending Resident Council Minutes

It is important to not only have a Resident Council meeting monthly but to trend the minutes yearly. This should be a yearly Q/A. Once a year, prior to your survey window, review all resident council minutes. Look for trends and repeated complaints. Often times when we survey facilities, we find that the Resident Council Minutes are not complete, lack appropriate responses and follow up for issues, and no proof that the issues have been resolved.

When a Resident Council Meeting is held. First make sure that the residents have complete privacy, by placing a sign on the door that says, "Do Not Enter, Resident Council in Session." If a staff member is responsible for the meeting taking place, be sure that all residents are aware of the meeting. No staff member is allowed to enter the meeting unless invited. If staff are attending, have staff sit with the resident's vs. lining up the staff in front of them. When you do this, it establishes department heads against the residents instead of everyone working together to resolve concerns and suggestions. Always have food and microphone.

Once the meeting is underway, insure that all participants have a copy of the last meeting's minutes. The minutes should be typed in 14 point, not hand written in pencil. The minutes must show clear resolutions. Note the concern and what action was taken. The department head that the problem was addressed to should formally answer the concern and provide proof (in writing) that the issue was resolved. The department head should sign off on all issues with the date the issue was resolved, their name and title. The resolutions must be turned into the Activity Director or Social Work Director that runs the meeting at minimum a week prior to the meeting.

The resident council minutes should not identify a resident by their full name. Keep a separate piece of paper with the residents name on it for personal items that need to be addressed, such as leaky faucet. If it's a resident right issue such as abuse or neglect, investigate this immediately. It is against their resident rights and right to privacy to place their full name on the minutes.

The minutes should be grouped in categories by departments to make the report easy to read and follow. If there are issues that can not resolved by the next meeting, state why and what action is being taken.

If you provide a written report to the participants, it cuts down on comments, like, "No one does anything about it, nothing is resolved!" Because they will have written proof in their hands that concerns and suggestions are taken seriously.

You should develop a form that list the concern or suggestion, department responsible for the item, resolutions, department head, date and signature. The cover page of your report should list: Date of meeting, Time began and Time closed, residents and staff in attendance, New Minutes and old minutes. But the actual concerns should be listed on a form that is easy to read, vs. a report style document. Forms are available at [www.activitytherapy.com](http://www.activitytherapy.com) Be sure to keep a file that contains the last three months of the council minutes and provide to state surveyors if requested.

One thing to pay close attention to is a Resident Council report that has no complaints, concerns or suggestions. No facility is perfect. Could this be a toxic environment and residents are afraid to voice opinions? Do they feel nothing is resolved? Are they afraid of getting someone in trouble by complaining? You need to hear it first vs. a state surveyor reporting this issue to you. You can't fix it if you don't know about a problem, concern or suggestion.

Once a year, review and trend all the resident council minutes. Begin by taking a piece of paper and writing down in a column every resident concern, recommendations and issue. Next place a hatch mark next to the item, if, it comes up more than once. If it does, how have you resolved this issue? For example, the resident complains over and over again about the food. Did you begin a Dietary Committee? Or there is on going complaints about the temperatures of the food such as being too cold? Did the Dietary department conduct a quality assurance addressing temperatures? These responses, investigations and quality assurance reports need to be included in the resident council resolutions.

## ABOUT SANDRA

Sandra Stimson has experience as a corporate consultant, Corporate Trainer and National Speaker. Her experience is in long term care, as Activity Director, Director of Alzheimer's Units and Assistant Administrator of a 550 bed long term care county home. She is Co-founder of Pet Express Pet Therapy Club, is a Life Replay Specialist. Sandra implements dementia units nationwide. Sandra has written several books, Volunteer Management Essentials for Long Term Care and Pet Express Pet Therapy Program. Sandra has been a facilitator for Alzheimer's support groups and is the Awards Chair for the NJ Association of Activity Professionals. Sandra is the Executive Director of **National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners**  
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**Alternative Solutions in Long Term Care** offers resources for health care professionals in many areas of dementia care, care plans, Snoezelen products, dementia activity calendars, adult day care calendars, sensory calendars, reminisce videos for dementia, activity books, and dates to remember, party supplies, resources and links.



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Once you have identified repeated concerns, you must work to eliminate this issue. Generally, the dietary department takes the most criticism because of many reasons. The food may not be prepared or seasoned the way the resident may have prepared the item at home. Some concerns can be resolved.

There are some administrators who do not want a lot of complaints at the resident council or do not want additional Empowerment Groups such as Activity Planning Committee, News letter Committee, Trip Planning Committee and Dietary Committee because of the belief that all residents do is complain. We stress the importance of having as many empowerment groups as possible. It shows a healthy emotional environment vs. a toxic environment where residents live in fear of retaliation if they complain. It also shows that you value their opinion, makes them feel they have self worth and provides something to look forward to. The other thing to note is its better to hear a concern at the meetings vs. having a state surveyor bring it to you. Its better that you hear it first. Residents don't need our permission to meet informally or formally. So, why not plan these empowerment groups and encourage participation. Minutes from these empowerment groups should be included in your resident council meetings.

If, the resident council meetings seem over powered by Dietary Issues, than begin a Dietary Committee. Let the residents have input in planning one meal a month, eliminating items that residents overall do not like and adding new items to the menu. The Dietary Director could bring samples to the meeting of new items the department is looking at. Also bring cook books for residents to look at in planning a Resident Choice Meal. This type of committee builds strong rapport with the Dietary Director and empowers the residents to play an active role in this area. - END



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