

Hebrew Home Family Council Annual Report: September 2011-June 2012

This is the second Annual Report of the Hebrew Home Family Council, an independent organization of families and friends of Hebrew Home residents launched on July 15, 2010. Its mission is to promote and improve the quality of life of all Hebrew Home residents by: (1) meeting monthly to discuss and take actions related to improving the care, well-being, and quality of life of all Hebrew Home residents; (2) serving as a resource to support and educate family members and friends of Hebrew Home residents about topics related to aging and eldercare; and (3) communicating with and making recommendations to Hebrew Home administration and staff to help achieve the best possible quality of life for all Hebrew Home residents.

During the past year, the Family Council has:

1. Provided educational programs for family members,
2. Worked with Hebrew Home leadership to improve quarterly care plan meetings,
3. Held an informational meeting to review the annual federal/state licensing survey,
4. Provided a forum for Hebrew Home leadership and staff to meet with family members and exchange feedback on issues of mutual interest and concern,
5. Raised concerns to senior leadership about the need to improve communication between families and Hebrew Home staff, and
6. Initiated the general nursing assistants (GNAs) Shining Star Awards program in partnership with the Hebrew Home.

This report describes the Family Council's efforts during the past year in each of these areas. Thanks to the support of the Hebrew Home leadership, the Family Council is now an active participant in efforts to help make the Hebrew Home the premier long-term care facility in suburban Maryland. The Family Council supports the Hebrew Home's goal to promote resident dignity and respect, and we look forward to working with administration and staff in the coming year to facilitate a resident- and family-centered care program at the Hebrew Home.

1. Provided educational programs for family members

The Family Council Education Subcommittee, co-chaired by Marcia King, Carolyn Levine, and Alice London, arranged several well-attended educational forums this year. A two-part dementia care program, held in December 2011 and March 2012, was led by the Hebrew Home's Patty Hagen, now Director of Alzheimer's and Dementia Programming, and Carol Shapiro, Nurse Educator. The sessions explained the various type of dementia and provided a number of communication tools and references for family members to use to improve communication with loved ones. Family Council

members were invited to contact Patty and Carol to discuss individual concerns and receive guidance specific to their loved one.

The April 2012 *Palliative and Hospice Care in Nursing Homes* program explained the differences between these two services as well as their benefits. Judi Lund Person, VP, Compliance and Regulatory Leadership, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, and Shawn Brennan, Program Manager, Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging, described the eligibility criteria for these programs and brought a number of resources for family members to use in assessing whether their loved ones would benefit from these services.

During the program, we also learned about Maryland's new Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST), a form that specifies a person's wishes for medical care if he/she is unable to communicate. (This is in addition to any Advance Directive or Do Not Resuscitate form that may have been signed by an individual.) The form is signed by a doctor or nurse practitioner and kept in a resident's medical file. The Family Council will stay abreast as the Hebrew Home rolls out implementation of MOLST at care plan meetings.

2. Worked with Hebrew Home leadership to improve quarterly care plan meetings

The Family Council worked with Hebrew Home senior leadership to improve quarterly care plan meetings. First, we recommended changes to the meeting invitation letter so that it would more clearly explain the purpose of the meeting, the scheduling process, and how to obtain a copy of the care plan. In addition, we drafted a list of questions for families to consider in preparing for and taking notes at the meeting. In response, the Hebrew Home's newly appointed Director of Social Work, Lori Saffitz, drafted a new invitation letter and a "Resident Care Conference Notes" form. The notes form is now being distributed at the meetings so that family members can record information or decisions about issues related to nursing, nutrition, social work, recreational therapy, and other areas discussed at the meeting.

Second, the Family Council worked with the Hebrew Home to clarify the process for family members and residents to obtain copies of the care plan. This information is now included in the invitation letter.

Third, the Hebrew Home's Director of Performance Improvement, Andrea Brown, monitored some care plan meetings to evaluate how they were conducted and any differences among the units. She found that some meetings are led by unit social workers and others by nurse managers. She will continue to review the meetings before making her recommendations.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Hebrew Home to ensure that all units conduct effective and meaningful care plan meetings. In this regard, we plan to survey

Family Council members later this year on their experiences and satisfaction with these meetings and share their feedback with the Hebrew Home.

3. Held an informational meeting to review the annual federal/state licensing survey

In December, Barbara Hirsch, Hebrew Home VP, Quality and Corporate Compliance, briefed the Family Council on the 2011 state inspection survey. Results showed improvement over the prior year. Most important, none of the nine deficiencies showed actual harm, and a plan of correction was set in place. The Family Council discussed the findings and made copies of the survey available to its members.

4. Provided a forum for Hebrew Home leadership and staff to meet with family members and exchange feedback on issues of mutual interest and concern

Hebrew Home leadership and staff met with the Family Council this year to share their vision and to receive feedback from family members. In October, then new Hebrew Home Administrator Neal White described his lifelong mission to help others through health care and his hands-on style of management. He was very open to working with the Family Council and in April, invited the Family Council Co-Chairs to meet each month with him and other senior staff to discuss our concerns and recommendations. These meetings have proven to be an invaluable opportunity for a direct line of communication with Hebrew Home leadership.

In November, the new Hebrew Home VP for Medical Services, Dr. James Lett, met with the Family Council and discussed his goal to improve care transitions for residents. The Family Council gave him a set of questions to consider in crafting a FAQ brochure for families to explain how best to communicate with the medical staff. We will urge him to proceed with this project in the coming year.

The newly appointed Director of Recreational Therapy, Russell Rogers, will speak at the June 10 annual meeting of the Family Council. We look forward to working with him to expand volunteer entertainment programs at the Hebrew Home in the coming year.

5. Raised concerns to senior leadership about the need to improve communication between families and Hebrew Home staff

Family members have repeatedly expressed concerns about the lack of a convenient and reliable communication system at the Hebrew Home. The inability to hold staff accountable regarding requests, feedback, and other communication, especially from one shift to the next, is a continuing source of frustration for families. Communication is also challenging when it occurs in the evening or on the weekend, the times that family members are most likely to visit their loved ones.

The Family Council has suggested several ways to address this problem. At our May meeting with the Administrator, he agreed to explore ways to address this problem.

One suggestion is to place a notebook at the unit secretary's desk where families can record requests or notes. The charge nurse or secretary would be responsible for checking the book each shift and ensuring that the communications are forwarded to appropriate staff. We also suggested purchasing software that would enable families to communicate using laptops stationed at the unit desks or remotely via the website. We will continue to work with the Hebrew Home to find a solution to this critical problem.

6. Initiated the general nursing assistants (GNAs) Shining Star Awards program

The Family Council is particularly proud of its GNA Shining Star Award Program, which is conducted in partnership with the Hebrew Home. This year we participated in three award ceremonies, awarding the Family Council Shining Star Pin to: Marva Issacs – SK 2 East; Beatrice Appiah – Wasserman 3 North; Louisa Williams – Wasserman 3 North; Michele Simpson – SK 2 South; Gloria Veney – Wasserman 3 North; Grace Williams – SK 3 South; and Marbel Pineda – SK 4 South.

The award ceremonies were conducted on the unit to enable unit residents and staff to participate. Senior leadership often attended, and a poster with the award winner's photo was placed in the front lobby of the residence.

At the ceremony, Family Council Co-Chair describes the important role of the GNA in caring for the residents and the basis for their selection and then pins the Star pin on the recipient. Cake and punch is served, and the award recipients receive a gift card and certificate from the Hebrew Home. Family Council members nominate GNAs who: are compassionate, interact well with families, treat residents with respect, respond to residents' physical and emotional needs, and work well with his or her peers. We will likely expand the nomination process in the future to allow non-Family Council members to nominate GNAs.

Conclusion

In its second year, the Family Council has continued to serve as an important voice for families and residents and a source of education for its members. We are dedicated to enhancing the quality of care for all residents at the Hebrew Home. In the coming year, the Family Council plans to:

- Work to increase membership. The Hebrew Home has agreed to mail a letter drafted by the Family Council to the Hebrew Home mailing list inviting families to join the Family Council. We will schedule "meet and greet" opportunities as families visit with their loved ones and at Hebrew Home programs.
- Continue to work with the Hebrew Home to develop communication systems to ensure that family requests, questions, and feedback are channeled to the appropriate staff and that families receive prompt responses.

- Continue to invite family members to share their experiences and concerns at Family Council meetings so that the Family Council can bring them to the attention of Hebrew Home leadership.
- Work with the Director of Recreational Therapy to bring additional talent to entertain Hebrew Home residents.
- Work with the Hebrew Home to develop its palliative care program and define its end-of-life policies and practices, and then to educate families and residents about these initiatives.

In conclusion, the Family Council will continue to work in partnership with the Hebrew Home senior leadership and staff in their efforts to provide the best possible resident- and family-centered care.

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