

Planning a Family Meeting

If possible, hold a family meeting to discuss long-term care issues before a time of emergency. This will help to have a plan of action in place when the time comes to make difficult choices. For more background information see Families Talking Together. Use this worksheet to plan your family meeting and record decisions.

Purpose

For example: to discuss Mom’s wishes for her future long-term care needs or to plan for Mom’s care following her surgery.

Who should be invited: list names of family and friends who are concerned and may be affected by the decisions being made—including the care-receiver.

Rules: What ground rules do you want to set for your family meeting? Examples might include rules such as “No interrupting when another person is speaking” or “We are only going to discuss issues on the agenda.”

Consider involving a facilitator if you are concerned about conflict or strong emotions. This could be a social worker, counselor, clergy or other professional.

Issues to be discussed: Ask family members to list concerns in advance if possible. List the issues so that nothing is missed. If one person is already serving as primary caregiver, he/she should list areas where assistance is needed.

At the meeting

When you hold your family meeting, begin by reminding everyone of the purpose of the meeting and reviewing the rules you have agreed upon. If you are using a professional facilitator, he or she may have additional guidelines. It may be helpful to use a large poster or flipchart to record discussions.

State the problem or decision to be made.

Brainstorm possible solutions.

1. On a large paper list all ideas. No idea is bad—just list the thoughts.
2. Choose the most acceptable solution for now
3. Create a plan to implement that solution.
4. Ask individuals to volunteer for specific tasks—make a written plan.
5. Set a time limit to come back and evaluate how well the plan is working.
6. Meet again to evaluate the success of the plan. If necessary go back to the list of ideas and try another plan.
7. Continue to meet on a regular basis to evaluate, address new issues, and keep family communications open.

Example

Task	Responsible Person	When
Take Mom to monthly doctor appointment	Sue	3rd Tuesdays
Explore home health services available	Tom	Report at next meeting
Arrange for home-bound meals	Ann	this week
Call to check on Mom daily	rotate	mornings

Next meeting: date & time

Make a contact list of telephone numbers or e-mail addresses for all involved.