



AB 979 (Alvarez): Family Councils Reforms

Bill Summary

AB 979 updates regulations regarding family councils in long-term care facilities.

Background

Family councils are organized groups of family members and friends of long-term care facility residents who meet regularly to share information and discuss concerns about the quality of care in the facility. Family councils are critically important to supporting long-term care facility residents and maintaining a high quality of care in long-term care facilities.

Problems

California's family council laws are increasingly anachronistic, representing a time before email communication and COVID lockdowns. These laws guarantee the use of facility space for in-person meetings and physical bulletin boards for displaying meeting notices and other important communication but do not account for virtual meetings or communication through email. During 2020-21, when families and friends could not enter long-term care facilities, family councils struggled to meet and communicate.

Statutory reform is needed to support the vital work that family councils carry out.

Conclusion

Legislation is needed to modernize existing family council laws so members can meet and communicate electronically. The laws also need updating to ensure facilities are more responsive to concerns raised by family councils and that

operators are discouraged from undermining their activities. Finally, the laws need to be amended to harmonize family council protections in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, which currently have notably different rules.

Specifically, AB 979 make the following changes:

- Allows family councils at long-term care facilities to meet and communicate electronically
- Requires facilities to respond to family council concerns in writing within five business days
- Authorizes a person other than a family member, friend, or resident representative to attend meetings if invited by the family council
- Requires the facility to provide potential family council members with the name and contact information of the family council representative prior to or within five business days after the resident's admission
- Requires a facility to provide the family council with contact information of potential family council members unless they opt-out.

Support

- California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform

For More Information

Vincenzo Caporale, Legislative Aide
Assemblymember David Alvarez, District 80
Office: 916-319-2080
Vincenzo.Caporale@asm.ca.gov