

# NY Connects Technical Assistance Resource: Long Term Care Council

## Purpose

This technical assistance resource provides guidance and direction for the successful formation and functioning of a Long Term Care Council for **NY Connects: Choices for Long Term Care**. Resources used to develop this tool include the 2006 New York State Point of Entry Standards, interviews with Aging and Disability Resource Center's across the country, the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) website ([www.adrc-tae.org](http://www.adrc-tae.org)), and input from counties throughout New York State that have been successful in developing collaborative advisory councils.

## Background

Point of Entry Standard 13 requires that each county establish a local Long Term Care Council to conduct long term care system planning and development in an effort to create a seamless, user-friendly long-term care system. The purpose of the **NY Connects** Long Term Care Council is to identify emerging long-term care needs in the county and to forge new relationships and reinforce existing ones in order to work toward improved communication and a more streamlined long-term care service delivery system. As set forth in Standard 13, the Long Term Care Council will have the following duties and responsibilities: at a minimum,

Standard 13: A Long Term Care Council (LTCC) must exist in each county to conduct long term care system planning and development in order to ensure achievement of the goals and objectives of the POE [**NY Connects**]. This council must report their activities and recommendations to the lead agency, who are required to report directly to the county chief elected official, legislative board or their designee.

- The lead agency will provide leadership, logistical and administrative support to the LTCC.
- The AAA [Area Agencies on Aging] Director and the LDSS [Local Department of Social Services] Commissioner must be members of the LTCC.
- The LTCC must meet on a regular basis, at a frequency adequate to fulfill its responsibilities.
- The LTCC must have governing policies in place which address recruitment, selection, membership criteria and attendance, meeting frequency and the process for documentation and follow up of meeting outcomes.
- LTCC membership must be representative of the diversity of the consumer populations served, the residential and community based long-term care provider community and advocacy groups.
- In its advisory capacity, the LTCC must have the following duties and responsibilities at a minimum:
  - a. Identify and analyze emerging community needs in the long term care service delivery system, based on identified gaps, service accessibility and availability and develop strategies to respond to those needs in a timely and appropriate fashion;

- b. Solicit input from long term care stakeholders regarding changes in the community environment (e.g., new resources or closing of providers), legislation, or regulations;
- c. Review the long term care service delivery system by identifying current entry points to the system and the manner by which populations in need of long term care services navigate or access services throughout the system; and
- d. Serve in an advisory capacity and as a catalyst to advance changes in the long-term care system when modifications are required to ensure the availability of appropriate and quality community services.

### **Benefits of the Long Term Care Council**

There are many benefits to establishing a Long Term Care Council. Counties that have successfully implemented the LTCC have cited the following benefits. The LTCC:

- Enables a broader view of the long term care system by engaging new partners;
- Produces shared knowledge about all long term care services and programs;
- Identifies potential partners that can assist with reciprocal training;
- Expedites access and navigation through the long term care system by improving communication between programs;
- Identifies potential resources that may have been overlooked. For example, a provider may be providing the same service to different populations;
- Develops creative solutions to ensure access for all long term care consumers and their caregivers;
- Identifies possible duplication of services or activities as a starting point to making more efficient and effective use of resources.
- Provides ownership of the process for engaging in local systems change by seeking community input.

### **Procedures for Establishing your Long Term Care Council**

This document provides general direction and suggestions for the successful development of your LTCC, as well as how these suggestions relate specifically to the tasks of the LTCC. It highlights several key considerations that may assist in making your LTCC effective.

Considerations include:

- Establish governing policies* – The LTCC is a collaboration of many different individuals, all of whom bring their own expectations and backgrounds to the table. It is helpful to establish governing policies to guide recruitment, selection, membership criteria, attendance, meeting frequency, the process for documentation and follow up of meeting outcomes.

Never assume that there is only one way to conduct business of the group. As needed, modify and create a procedure for doing work that meet the needs of most members, promotes full participation and high levels of productivity, and creates a comfortable atmosphere that is inviting to new members.

It is important to educate members on the procedures and the operating structure of the committee at the onset. Policies and procedures can be formal or informal. It is important to have clearly established processes, preferably written, in order to provide consistency of operating procedures over time.

Suggested policies and procedures for consideration include:

- Relationship and responsibility of the LTCC to the lead entity
  - Operating procedures;
  - Organizational structure;
  - Membership provisions (including recruitment strategies)
    - Outreach procedures to recruit new members
    - Membership selection procedure
    - Term duration and criteria for continuing membership;
  - List of duties or expectations of officers, board members, general members, and committee members; and
  - Meeting procedures including attendance requirements and voting procedures.
- Engage stakeholders early* - Inclusion and active participation of stakeholders from the start ensures that members feel responsibility for the success of the program. The NYS Point of Entry Standards indicate that the LTCC must be representative of the community it serves and be reflective of the ethnic, linguistic, and economic diversity of the service population. It must include consumers, representatives of all organizations that provide long term care services, as well as of the local government agencies involved.
- Establish structure, manage group size and delegate responsibilities* - A balanced representation of diverse members is crucial to the effective functioning of the LTCC.

The main body of the LTCC should be large enough to be representative, but small enough to be functional. Deciding who needs to be at the table is integral to moving the work at hand forward.

As listed above, the AAA Director and the LDSS Commissioner are required, as per the **NY Connects** Standards, to be a part of the LTCC. Other participants should be at a high enough level within their organizations to have both the authority and the responsibility to make the decisions necessary to advance system change and to carry them out. Representation or a link to the County's governing structure would be helpful.

Inclusion of consumers who have received and/or are presently receiving services and who are representative of the ethnic and economic diversity of the service population provides invaluable feedback regarding the ease of use and access to services, as well as assistance in the development of solutions to identified barriers. Consumers may include caregivers for disabled children, disabled adults, and the older adults needing long-term care. It is highly recommended that the LTCC have multiple consumers representing each of the populations served by **NY Connects**.

Community based and residential long term care service providers that provide long term care services (e.g. licensed home care services agencies, certified home health agencies, non-medical providers nursing homes, social adult day care programs, home delivered meals) help to give input into service delivery issues, such as service delivery area, staffing issues, service gaps, etc. Moreover, advocacy groups (e.g. Alzheimer's Association, Independent Living Center) can assist in providing insight into a broader range of issues and be instrumental in advocating for change on a larger scale.

When there are multiple providers of one type of resource (e.g. home care agency), the council may wish to consider having those providers select a representative or decide how to best rotate participation.

A group that is too large may produce a barrier that inhibits active participation by all members. Consider establishing an Executive Committee or other leadership team, as a means to move decisions along without having to convene the entire group. This group will help to streamline the decision making process. Establishing smaller work groups or subcommittees is a more efficient means of getting work done that is topic or task focused.

An Executive Committee or leadership team is usually composed of those with the decision-making authority to achieve countywide systems change that will promote access to long term care services based on consumer choice through coordinated, user-friendly means. In this case, you may consider the AAA Director, the LDSS Commissioner and the other major partners listed on your application such as Public Health, for example. The Executive Committee or leadership team works with the larger LTCC and its work groups and/or subcommittees to implement systems change as defined in Standard 13.

There is always room for any individual that offers to contribute. Ad hoc committees can be established to address issues identified through the analysis of the long term care system in your county. These committees can be structured based on task or issue, e.g. Resource Directory, Transportation. The work produced by the committees is then brought back to the larger LTCC for discussion and approval.

The following are examples of types of task and topic related committees and their responsibilities:

Task related:

**Resource Directory** sub-committee makes recommendations to the LTCC regarding the following activities:

- Collection of data from providers/organizations for inclusion in the Resource listing;
- Responsiveness of the Resource listing for both the disability and aging networks, as well as helping professionals and caregivers seeking information regarding long term care services; and
- Feedback regarding the design of Website functions, format, and content.

**Issue related:**

**Transportation sub-committee** provides recommendations to the LTCC regarding the following activities:

- Establishing new relationships between traditional and non-traditional transportation providers
  - Evaluating possible new means of providing transportation to different populations
  - Advocating and follow up on identified barriers to transportation
- ☑ *Frequency of meetings* - The LTCC must meet on a regular basis, at a frequency adequate to fulfill its responsibilities. Many programs report that quarterly meetings are most effective. However, during the initial implementation phase it may be useful to convene the group more often, e.g. bimonthly. For councils that have committee work groups or sub-committees, the smaller groups may benefit from more frequent meetings, with the full Council meeting quarterly.
- ☑ *A strong facilitator is the key to successful communication* - The LTCC will be composed of a diverse group of individuals and representatives of organizations. An effective facilitator can help members overcome differences and understand their common interests, ideas, and goals. It is important to have a skilled facilitator who is sensitive to the unique needs of members of the group. A strong facilitator also keeps the group on task and moving forward. Ideally, this would be the chair of the council.
- ☑ *Educate your members* - The entire LTCC will benefit from taking time to understand each other's backgrounds and experiences. By taking time to establish this understanding, it will help to avoid a situation where a few members dominate the process.

It is recommended that an orientation be provided for new members within the first few months of joining the LTCC. It is helpful to include a glossary of terms and acronyms. You will have members from different systems, as well as consumers, who may not be familiar with acronyms and terms used by the respective systems. Orientation can include educating members on topics such as the purpose and mission of **NY Connects**, Medicaid and long term care reform, disability and aging services and other related issues or services. Consider having members provide an overview of their programs. Through this process, members can learn about each other's role in the long term care system. Sharing and working toward mutual understanding will help everyone better understand future comments and the concerns that are raised in committee meetings. Providing members with a copy of the Action Plan and reviewing it at one of the first meetings and regularly thereafter will assist the group in understanding the goals, objectives and the time frame by which they need to be met. Use the time frame as a guide to prioritizing activities and discussions.

- ☑ *Establish priorities* - It is important that your LTCC have a similar starting point for discussions. Discuss the results of the long term care system analysis or the Action Plan and then evaluate individual member's sense of priorities to build consensus for the priorities of the group. This process can help Council members develop an appreciation of each other's roles in the design, delivery or use of long term care services.
- ☑ *Meeting Format* - Effective meetings also help to keep members involved. Start by mailing out an agenda, a packet of background information needed for decision making, and minutes from the last meeting at least one week before the meeting. Specify when the meeting will begin and end. Start and adjourn on time. The meeting facilitator or leader should ensure

that discussion does not stray from the agenda and that the discussion leads to an agreed-upon course of action on all items that require decisions.

It may be beneficial to prepare and disseminate materials well in advance of meetings to allow sufficient time for people to absorb the content.

- ☑ *Meeting facilities and meeting materials should be accessible* - Accessibility means much more than physical accommodations. In addition to an accessible meeting space, it is important to consider whether materials are needed in large print (both on paper and electronic) or if there is a need to arrange for TDD lines or telephone relay services for participants with sensory disabilities. Consider both the times and locations for meetings. Will participants be able to attend during working hours? Is parking available or is the location on a public transportation route? Do participants need assistance with arranging transportation? Will consumers need child care or adult care in order to participate? Consider the use of conference calling technology to cut down on travel expenses.

The group changes as new members join, current members leave, or the requirements of the program change. Membership policies and procedures that allow for alternates, proxies, or other types of participation (such as telephone hook-ups) encourage participation by consumers or providers who may be geographically dispersed. The key is flexibility and taking the time to develop a process that works best.

- ☑ *Take action to help prevent burnout and sustain member commitment* - Sustaining commitment and enthusiasm is challenging. All groups experience an ebb and flow of involvement. It is important to bring in new members on an ongoing basis to bring in new energy and fresh perspectives. Ensure that new members have a defined role and know their responsibilities and the expectations of membership on the Council. New members who are unclear about their role may become observers rather than participants, or may drop out because they do not know how to contribute or where they fit into the process. This applies to both consumer and provider members. Consumers may need additional education, support and encouragement to sustain their involvement. Following up with members who drop out can provide an opportunity for re-engagement.

It is also important to acknowledge the contributions of existing members. Methods to sustain member commitment include the following:

- Acknowledge members for their contributions. Celebrate accomplishments. Give members positive feedback by thanking them at meetings, honoring them at special events, developing an awards program or featuring members in newspaper or newsletter articles.
- Consider scheduling time for optional socializing and networking immediately before or after the meeting. For some people, these opportunities represent a critical reason to remain involved.
- Provide transportation, if needed, for consumer members. Offering a stipend or other form of compensation will help to offset any costs they may incur in order to participate and will increase their feeling of value and commitment.

- Consider assigning a mentor or a buddy to new members. New members may be more apt to ask questions of one person, than address a large group. The Mentor or buddy can also be responsible for making sure the new member has the background information necessary to understand what the priorities of the group are at present.
- Stay on task* – Periodically review the intent and purpose of the Council in order to assure that you are moving in the right direction. Refer to the Action Plan to develop meeting agendas to ensure that you are addressing the Action Plan tasks in a timely manner.