



Leadership

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The Alzheimer Society of Canada has identified the following 7 key elements of person-centred care:

- 1 Person and Family Engagement
- 2 Care
- 3 Processes
- 4 Environment
- 5 Activity & Recreation
- 6 Leadership
- 7 Staffing

There is an information sheet on each of these elements to help long-term care homes begin and sustain a “culture change” to provide a person-centred approach to care.

Person-centred care can only happen with strong leaders who are champions of person-centred care, ingrain it in their organizational philosophy and values, and model the actions expected of staff in their own interactions with residents, families and staff. Person-centred leaders understand and embrace the person-centred philosophy, demonstrating a personal and organizational commitment to the principles and practices of person-centred care in the home. They promote culture change, establish strong relationships with families, and empower staff.

Key principles and some innovative strategies from Canadian long-term care homes

Core principle	Strategies
Leadership and administrative teams are the champions of person-centred care in the home. The leadership team recognizes person-centred care as a philosophy that informs decision-making and actions, articulating it in their vision and mission statements, policies and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a vision and mission document for person-centred care that articulates the organization’s values, beliefs and philosophy, and how it can achieve and sustain that vision. Share the document with staff, residents and families to reinforce and further support culture change. Leaders make the vision live by ensuring that the home implements leading-edge best practices in person-centred care.• Make the vision and mission accessible to all, using a visual image, such as a sunflower, to represent all the elements needed for the home’s growth and progress towards enriching the lives of the residents and staff through the delivery of person-centred care. The sunflower mission and vision pictorial is used in the orientation of new staff, interactive staff workshops to assess performance and suggest improvements, and in first-person care plans for residents.

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“We are always out there. We’re accessible. We model the behaviours we expect from our staff. We will always ask, ‘Why is this good for our residents?’ You can’t know the residents here by sitting behind a desk looking at statistics. The stats are important, but you need to be with the staff, residents and families. You need to be visible and seen engaging in the process of care.”

– Director of therapeutic services

Core principle	Strategies
<p>Leadership and administrative teams are the champions of person-centred care in the home <i>continued</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate a vision of care and make necessary changes in the leadership team to support and achieve the vision to shift a home’s direction towards person-centred care and change an institution-centred culture. Form a new and broader leadership team that is more collaborative, interdisciplinary and representative of each functional area of the home.
<p>The leadership team models the person-centred actions expected from staff in their own interactions with residents, families and staff. The leadership team treats staff the way they want staff to treat residents, families and other staff. They encourage open communication and transparency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model person-centred actions by knocking on residents’ doors before entering, greeting residents by name in the hallways, always making eye contact with residents and staff, and demonstrating knowledge about a resident through their conversation. Language is an important tool for reinforcing the cultural values of the organization, so the leadership team is careful that the words they use always show respect and preserve the dignity and humanity of residents, family members and staff. They also continually monitor and correct in a respectful way the use of inappropriate language, labels and terminology among themselves and staff. • Be visible to verbally reinforce the person-centred focus with messages such as “it’s not our workplace as much as it’s the residents’ home.” This also gives the leadership team the opportunity to observe and fine-tune staff actions and approaches with on-the-spot feedback and coaching to help staff explore options to provide better and more individualized care. • Challenge decisions and actions that are contrary to the philosophy and principles of person-centred care and adopt a “root causes approach” to identify the underlying causes of families’, residents’ and staff actions.

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“Our CEO is very involved in the care of each resident. She reads all the 24-hour reports each day. She’s on the floor. She wants our home to be the best, so we need to be the best”

– Resident care associate

Core principle

The leadership team involves staff in decision-making to make culture change happen. Collaborative decision-making is a core element of culture change. Leaders provide staff with opportunities to contribute to decision-making in the home and equip them with the training and education needed to make person-centred care the norm throughout the organization.

Strategies

- Support staff to further their education and upgrade skills. Funds are allocated for staff bursaries across all disciplines to support more training in specific areas, like becoming a restraint-free home. A cheque is given to each recipient during a formal reception and an article with recipients’ pictures is then published in the staff newsletter. The leadership team ensures that staff training in person-centred care is inclusive of all staff, including those who do not have a direct care role such as housekeepers, janitors, cooks, drivers and administrative staff.
- Involve members of the leadership team with nursing backgrounds to conduct in-service and educational seminars for nursing and allied health staff. Leading these sessions provides opportunities to show how person-centredness fits into care delivery, and reinforces to clinical staff the commitment of the organization to person-centred care.
- Motivate staff and make them happy to ensure the satisfaction and happiness of residents. The leadership team accomplishes this by using both formal and informal processes to recognize and value employees. Give employees a voice in decision-making, and provide forums for employees to express their opinions and concerns. Learning circles, for example, give staff the time and space to explore, learn, question, share, discuss ideas and implement actions plans.

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“We manage based on our mission and set of principles. We teach managers and staff how to use them [mission and principles]. That’s how we empower staff. We teach that relationships are more important than tasks.”

– Leader, resident care

Core principle	Strategies
<p>The leadership team encourages staff to be creative and take initiative. They empower staff and recognize their innovative practical approaches to enhancing care, their capacity to reflect on actions and to problem-solve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage staff to use their knowledge, skills and creativity in delivering person-centred care. Support staff in trying new approaches with residents and being flexible in how and when care is provided. If one member of the team makes a mistake or the approach doesn’t work, the team talks about it, learns from the mistake and tries something else. Manager “Tool Boxes” provide a way for managers to give immediate recognition and reward staff for their accomplishments in delivering person-centred care. These special goodie boxes contain gifts to give out to staff when they go beyond the call of duty. • Encourage staff to come forward with suggestions and recommendations to enhance the quality of residents’ lives. A director of therapeutic services supported the initiative taken by a music therapist in planning a bell choir for residents and wrote a proposal to the volunteer society to get the funding for an extra set of hand chimes.
<p>Create and sustain a culture of person-centred care as a core responsibility on which leaders and managers are evaluated. Leaders communicate expectations to staff about providing person-centred care and continually follow up to ensure these expectations are being met on an ongoing basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct performance reviews for all staff, including the leadership team, as these are directly linked to the home’s person-centred philosophy, principles and action expectations. The reviews are designed to assess progress, reinforce and reward person-centred actions, and identify people within the home who may need more support and direction in being person-centred in their approach.