

NEXT STEPS:

BUILDING INCLUSION & BELONGING IN FAMILY COUNCILS

Thank you for joining the 2026 Family Councils Ontario (FCO) Tour session on inclusion, belonging, and strengthening Family Councils across Ontario. During this session, participants explored how Family Councils can create welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environments for all residents, caregivers, and family members in long-term care.

The discussions highlighted the importance of recognizing diverse experiences, removing barriers to participation, and building stronger relationships within long-term care communities. This document is intended to help continue the conversation within your own Family Council and support your next steps moving forward.

Summary of What We Talked About

During the session, we explored what diversity and inclusion mean within the context of long-term care and Family Councils.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion

Participants reflected on the meaning of diversity and how every individual brings unique experiences, perspectives, identities, and backgrounds to a community.

Diversity can include:

- Ethnicity and race
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Physical abilities and disabilities
- Education and lived experience
- Religion and spirituality
- Cultural background
- Beliefs and values

We also discussed inclusion and the importance of ensuring all individuals feel respected, welcomed, and able to participate meaningfully in Family Council discussions and activities.

The session emphasized that inclusion requires intentional action to identify and remove barriers that may prevent people from participating fully.

What We Learned About Caregiver and Family Council Experiences

FCO shared findings from research conducted in partnership with Evenings & Weekends Consulting. Through house meetings and a province-wide survey, caregivers and Family Council members shared their experiences navigating long-term care systems.

Some key findings included:

- Younger caregivers under age 35 were not represented in the survey
- Some communities, including South Asian, Black Caribbean, and Middle Eastern caregivers, were underrepresented
- Many caregivers experience barriers related to language, communication, accessibility, and navigating systems
- Experiences of racism, colonialism, homophobia, and transphobia continue to impact trust and feelings of safety within care settings
- Caregivers and residents may experience financial strain, mental health challenges, and barriers to meaningful participation

At the same time, councils demonstrated important strengths, including:

- Openness to welcoming new voices and members
 - Commitment to improving quality of life for residents
 - A willingness to learn and grow together
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Creating More Inclusive Family Councils

Participants explored practical opportunities for councils to strengthen inclusion and belonging, including:

- Improving accessibility and participation options
- Supporting respectful dialogue
- Strengthening diversity and representation
- Building relationships with families and communities
- Using clear and accessible communication
- Creating culturally safe and welcoming spaces

We also discussed the importance of reflecting on assumptions and considering how council practices may unintentionally create barriers for some members.

Questions to Take Back to Your Family Council

Use these questions to continue the discussion within your council:

1. What does diversity mean within our long-term care community?
 2. What does inclusion look like in our Family Council?
 3. Who may not currently feel represented or included in our meetings?
 4. What barriers might prevent families from participating?
 5. How accessible are our meetings, communication methods, and materials?
 6. Are there voices or perspectives we are not hearing from?
 7. How can we create safer and more welcoming spaces for all families?
 8. What assumptions do we make about caregiving, communication, participation, or family roles?
 9. How can we strengthen relationships with residents, caregivers, and communities?
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Ideas for Your Family Council

Here are some practical ideas your council may wish to explore:

Communication & Accessibility

- Use clear, consistent, and accessible communication
- Offer virtual or hybrid participation options
- Provide translated materials where possible
- Share meeting information in multiple formats
- Offer different ways for members to provide feedback

Building Inclusion & Belonging

- Welcome new members intentionally
- Include introductions and relationship-building activities
- Acknowledge important cultural dates and observances
- Consider using land acknowledgements where appropriate
- Encourage respectful dialogue and curiosity
- Reflect on who is represented in leadership roles

Community Connections

- Partner with cultural or community organizations
- Invite diverse speakers or presenters
- Connect with underserved caregiver communities
- Explore opportunities for outreach within your home

Reflection & Growth

- Set time aside to revisit inclusion conversations regularly
 - Identify areas where your council would like to grow
 - Develop small, achievable action steps
 - Celebrate progress and learning together
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Next Steps

As your Family Council continues this work, consider taking the following next steps:

Continue the Conversation

Choose a future meeting date to revisit inclusion and belonging within your council. Ongoing reflection and discussion are important parts of creating meaningful change.

Explore FCO Tools & Resources

Family Councils Ontario offers a variety of resources, tools, education opportunities, and supports to help councils strengthen communication, participation, and engagement. Visit our website for FCO resources: [Family Councils Ontario Resources](#)

Connect With FCO

If your council would like additional support, training, or guidance related to inclusion, participation, communication, or Family Council development, FCO is available to help. Email info@fco.ngo to discuss training opportunities and supports for your council.

Join the Upcoming Online Session

We encourage participants to continue exploring this topic through FCO's upcoming online event, where we will build on these discussions and share additional ideas, strategies, and opportunities for Family Councils across Ontario. [Register for the online session on June 11, 2026.](#)

Create Belonging in Your Family Council

Creating inclusive and welcoming Family Councils is an ongoing process that grows through listening, learning, and relationship-building. Every Family Council has an opportunity to help strengthen belonging within long-term care communities by ensuring all families, caregivers, and residents feel respected, valued, and heard.

Thank you for participating in the FCO Tour 2026 and for your continued commitment to supporting meaningful engagement and connection in long-term care.

For more information, resources, or support for your Family Council, please contact Family Councils Ontario at info@fco.ngo or visit www.fco.ngo.

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