A terms of reference template

Use and adapt this template to create your council’s terms of reference.[[1]](#footnote-1)

[organization name and logo]

[name of your advisory council]

Terms of Reference

**Purpose**

[Insert your purpose / mandate / mission statement. Include an inspiring vision of the way that patient engagement can transform health care and briefly describe the council’s broad purpose. For examples, see the “Sample mandate statements” section of this guide]

**Responsibilities and opportunities**

[List the council’s key roles; use active words to inspire action, such as:]

To advise [the organization or program] on meeting the needs of patients and families through teamwork with staff

To advance patient engagement and patient-centred care in all services provided at [organization]

To provide a forum for patients and families to identify opportunities to improve the quality of care and to participate in quality improvement initiatives at [organization]

To promote opportunities for collaboration among patients, families and staff at [organization]

To promote the inclusion of all voices in health care decision-making

**Accountability and reporting relationships**

The [council name] communicates directly with the [senior leaders who are responsible for listening to and working with the council, e.g. the President and CEO].

The staff liaison for [the council] supports the council by [insert a brief overview of the liaison’s role].

**Members**

Members of the council will include: [List numbers for each type of member or the proportions of public and staff positions on the council]

X patient/family representatives

X senior management representative(s)

X clinical representatives

1 staff liaison]

All members are expected to: [List basic responsibilities, such as:

* Participate in at least X meetings per year of X-X hours each
* Participate in projects between meetings [Estimate this time commitment if possible]
* Inform the co-chairs or staff liaison if they will miss a meeting

**Term:** Members are asked to participate for X years, from [months that your meeting year runs, e.g. September 1 to August 31]. Members can serve for X terms. [Describe your process for balancing new and experienced membership.]

**Selection: [**Briefly describe your process for selecting public members, e.g. who is responsible]

**Patients and family members**

**Qualifications:**

* A patient or family member of a patient at [organization] in the past   
  [X] years
* [key qualities that you want to see in council members, for example:]
* Respects diversity and differing opinions
* Works collaboratively with staff and other members of the public
* Respects privacy and confidentiality
* Provides constructive advice
* Can represent families as a well-informed participant

**General requirements:**

* Attend a screening interview
* Sign a confidentiality agreement and volunteer contract
* Attend a [orientation, information, training sessions]
* [Other requirements, such as for any volunteer in your organization]

**Reimbursement and compensation:**

[Briefly describe your reimbursement and compensation policy; refer to more detailed information available from staff liaison if needed]

Staff and board members

[List the specific staff positions, including board of directors/trustees members, represented on the council]

**Officers**

Co-chairs

[Describe your election/selection process and whether co-chairs will be public members or a combination of public and staff members, for example;]

The [council] will elect two co-chairs from among its patient and family members. One co-chair will be elected for a two-year term every year at [which month] meeting. [This is an example of a rotation schedule, so that a new co-chair comes in each year]. Chairs can serve for a maximum X terms.

**Qualifications:**

[List requirements or key qualities such as:]

* An understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the [patient and family advisory council]
* Ability to provide democratic leadership for the council
* Ability to represent the collective voice of the council inside [the organization] and in the community
* Ability to represent the collective voice of the council inside [the organization] and in the community
* Desire to work constructively with staff and other council members
* Is respectful of difference and supports the inclusion of all voices at the table

**Duties:**

* Call and chair meetings
* Develop the meeting agenda with the staff liaison
* Review and revise meeting minutes
* Communicate with council members
* Confer with the CEO and senior management on matters related to the council’s work
* Write an annual report summarizing the council’s activities and achievements during the year
* Represent and speak on behalf of the [council] at [types of activities that the co-chair may participate in]

[repeat for vice-chair or past chair if your council has those positions]

**Meetings**

Frequency: The [council name] will meet at least X times a year.

Notice: [Describe how meetings will be publicized]

Decision-making: [Describe how the group will make decisions, e.g. will strive for consensus and will use voting when there is no clear agreement]

Quorum: At least XX% of the voting members must be present for a vote to take place.

Voting: [How will you vote? e.g. a show of hands or by secret ballot if requested]

Minutes: The staff liaison will be Within XX weeks of each meeting, minutes will be sent by email to:

All members of the [council]

[others who will get the minutes]

[others on request]

**Records retention**

The [council’s] records are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and are governed by [the organization’s] Records Retention Policy.

**Review**

The council will review these terms of reference every X years by [date] and approve any revisions.

1. This template is based on the terms of reference of the Family Advisory Committee of Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. We thank them for permission to adapt their terms of reference for this mini-guide. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)