



Who should be involved in our family meeting?

Family meetings can be a great opportunity for caregiving families to come together and talk about what's needed, wanted, and possible in their care and support arrangement. But who should be involved in a family meeting? Each family is different. Here are some tips to help you think through who should be involved in your family's meeting:

1 Include the person who needs care

For many reasons, it may feel awkward to include aging parents or partners in discussions about their own care and support. However, the perspective of the person with care needs is vital to creating a care and support arrangement that works well for everyone involved.

We all want to have a say in our own lives. Including the person with care needs in your family meeting tells that individual that you value their perspective.

2 Think about everyone who is closely affected by the care and support arrangement

The care and support arrangement often deeply impacts adult children, including, step-children and children-in-law. Grandchildren, nieces, nephews, friends, neighbors, and even paid care providers may also play a part and might well be included in a family meeting.

It may be helpful to ask these questions:

- Who's instrumental to keeping the person with care needs at home?
- Who's most impacted by the care and support arrangement now?
- Who else could potentially provide care and support now?
- Who else could help out in the future if needs for care and support change?

All family members may be surprised to learn how they can be involved in ways they hadn't considered before.

Note: There are circumstances where involving some family members may not be a good idea. In cases where there has been abuse of any kind, serious mental health concerns, or addiction, your family will need to carefully consider whether including certain family members would be counterproductive.

3 Don't be too quick to dismiss or exclude people who live far away or seem "too busy"

There are lots of creative ways that people living at a distance from the person with care needs can be helpful. Phone calls can be a great way to provide social contact and emotional support for persons with care needs. Long-distance family members can also help with identifying and coordinating resources and services. Some may be able to contribute financially to help with care costs.

There are multiple options available to connect family members who can't attend a family meeting in person. Some families do this by phone or via different internet tools such as Skype, FaceTime, Google Meet, and others. Someone in your family may be familiar with one of these tools and can help make it work.

Try not to make assumptions about family members' availability or willingness to help. Use your family meeting to have an open, honest conversation about who can do what, when, where, and how.

4 Keep the invitation open

Some family members just may not be ready or willing to participate in discussions about care and support. Extend an invitation, but don't force the issue. Let them know when and where the meeting is happening and that the invitation is open for them to participate.

5 Consider how those living with cognitive and physical challenges can be included

Cognitive challenges like memory loss and confusion or communication impairments may make it difficult for some individuals to participate in a family meeting.

Families are often quick to assume that a person living with memory loss or confusion can't contribute meaningfully or will hinder discussions about care and support, but you may be surprised by what you learn and experience by including them.

For individuals with hearing impairments or other communication challenges, consider adaptive equipment such as hearing amplifiers that might help them participate.

6 Think of your first family meeting as a starting point

You don't have to figure it all out in one day. Your first family meeting is a good place to discuss who else should be included in future meetings and to make plans to meet again.