

Practice:	Residential self-government – a form of advocacy for residents in institutional care
<u>Organisation / Country:</u>	Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection, Hungary.
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<u>Summary:</u>	<p>In Hungary, in facilities providing day care and in residential institutions can establish a “residential self-government” (if more than half of the residents request it) to represent their interests in the community and to organize their community life - through their elected representatives. This user representation performs the tasks specified in the organizational and operational regulations of the institution. The establishment of the residential self-government does not affect the operation of the Advocacy Forum – another form of user representation that is mandatory for all residential care institutions in Hungary.</p> <p>Residential self-government is a bottom-up initiative among residents. It develops its own operational framework and determines the relevant rules. Its officers are appointed by the residents by election, from which they can also elect a president / leader. The office-holders represent the interests of residents, issues affecting them are discussed. The decisions they make are passed on to the head of the institution.</p> <p>For example, they determine the frequency of the meetings, the goals that the residential self-government wants to achieve.</p> <p>The order of the residential self-governments shall not be in conflict with legal regulations or the organizational and operational regulations of the institution.</p> <p>The institution provides premises for the purposes of the residential self-government.</p> <p>The employees of the institution can provide assistance in the operation of the residential self-government.</p> <p>The residential self-government may not restrict the rights of the residents provided by law.</p>

	<p>The most relevant tasks of the self-government initiative are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representing in community the interests of carers and organizing their community life.• Community building, community formation.• Collaborate with the head and staff of the institution to improve the quality of care.• Handling of complaints submitted to the residential self-government.• Participation in integration efforts (e. g. participation or performing in events organized in the institution).• Protection of clients' interests and rights, peer support.• Promotion of the exercise of the right to expression, the improvement, formation and development of decision-making skills, and the exercise of the right to self-determination.• Assistance in enforcing the interests of the residents.• Information, information transfer.• Conflict management.• Support of self-organizing community activities, participation in organizing and conducting events.• External networking.• Collecting, discussing and forwarding the suggestions and motions of the residents to those concerned.• Discuss current problems, suggestions for solving them.• Operation of various forums, e.g. Menu Council, Food Committee, Occupational Committee, Sports Committee, Cultural Committee, etc.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the acceptance and compliance with the rules of cohabitation. • Provision of support to its members in exercising their rights. • Promotion of identification among the residents with the values of the institution.
<p><u>Resources:</u></p>	<p>It does not cost money to create a residential self-government. Members participate voluntarily in the work of the self-government. The necessary tools for the work (e. g. stationery, some catering) are provided by the institution. There may be costs associated with organizing the events.</p>
<p><u>Objectives:</u></p>	<p>The aim of this initiative is to provide an opportunity for active participation of care home residents in the life of the facility to contribute to its running and operations and to give them a stronger feeling of self-efficacy.</p> <p>The purpose of the residential self-government is to represent the interests of the residents in the community and to organize their community life. This is an opportunity for active participation in institutional life, based on a democratic basis in connection with and for the benefit of the life of the residents. As a self-governing system, the residential self-government promotes the exercise of the right to express one's opinion, the formation and development of decision-making ability, and the practice of self-determination through its activities. By embracing the life of the community more and more fully, it creates an opportunity for effective advocacy, a sense of responsibility and experience, arising from the organizing and executive function.</p> <p>Residential self-government representatives give a lot of good ideas to the management and professionals of the institution about an event that most residents would like to have. Current problems are reported immediately so staff can anticipate them.</p>

<p><u>Outcomes:</u></p>	<p>The work of the residential self-government is very important, as the members are the residents, who of course live in a community with their housemates, they share their problems and fears much more confidentially with each other. Members indicate even the slightest problem, as they know they represent their interests. Members take pride in their mission, feel they have a responsible job, and are often followed by their peers as role models.</p> <p>The establishment and operation of the residential government brings a lot of positive changes in the life of the institution.</p> <p>A report of an institution caring for psychiatric patients: <i>“The institution cares for psychiatric patients, with frequent conflicts and behavioural problems. Although this has not disappeared, such issues have become less common and less severe. As conflicts become apparent more quickly, professionals can handle them properly and prevent escalations. The community has become more cohesive. For instance, residents are very worried about their peers going to the hospital, so they often send them smaller gifts, and they may even visit them at the hospital. They pay more attention to each other; they really care about each other. Specialists have also observed that when a new resident arrives at the institution, not only the roommates, their immediate environment pay attention to them and help, but almost the entire residential community supports their integration. They also pay more attention to those with more problematic care, and they do not allow their “weaker” peers to be exploited, signalling immediately if there is a problem.”</i></p>
<p><u>Evaluation of practice:</u></p>	<p>The residential self-government participates effectively in the life of the housing community, and its assessment is absolutely positive.</p> <p>Residential self-governments operate efficiently, meet regularly, significantly help the work of the institution, actively participate in institutional life, and make suggestions for solving problems among the residents.</p> <p>Members are enthusiastic about their work and represent the interests of their housemates by constantly researching public opinion about issues that arise. They are motivated and creative in problem solving. Their sense of achievement motivates them further in the tasks they undertake.</p>

	<p>A report of an institution caring for psychiatric patients: <i>“The operation of the residential self-government in the institution is still effective. The residents turn to their members with confidence, the number of conflicts has significantly decreased, and helpers can respond to problems in a targeted way from the very beginning, and even prevent them. The events are organized according to the needs of the residents, so they are always enthusiastic about preparing and participating in them.”</i></p>
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