

# Forming and Maintaining a Cancer Center Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC)

Enhancing the Patient Experience and Driving Patient-Centered Care

Antonio P. DeRosa, MS, MLIS, AHIP\* | Noelle Trongone, CPXP†

\*Myra Mahon Patient Resource Center, Samuel J. Wood Library, Weill Cornell Medicine, New York, NY

†Oncology Service Line, NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, New York, NY

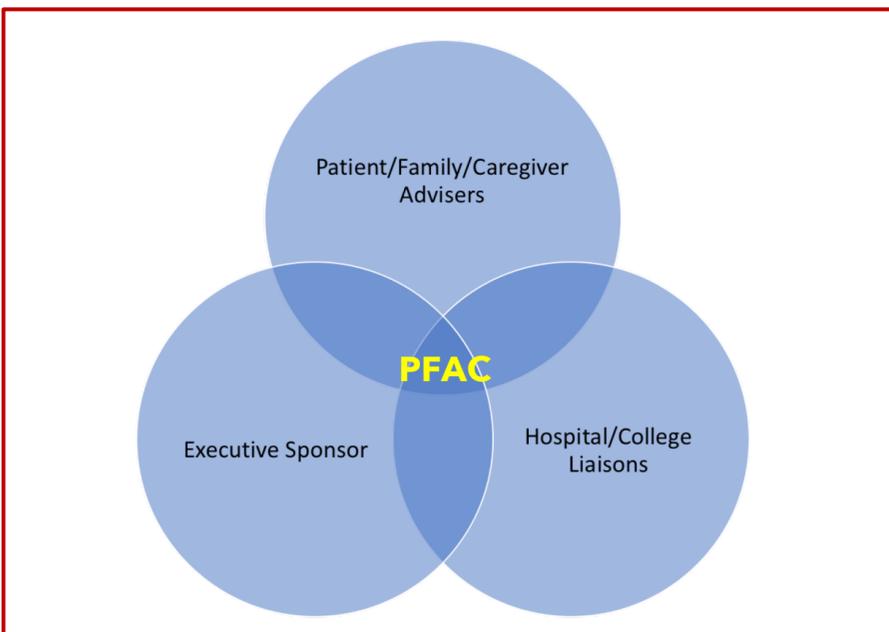
## BACKGROUND

Patient & Family Advisory Councils (PFAC) play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of patient- and family-centered care within a department, service line, and organization or medical center. The success of PFACs on quality improvement initiatives and the patient experience hinges on the steps taken to developing and implementing these groups. Implementing a plan to form and launch a PFAC can help to avoid some common pitfalls. The desire for offering a patient-centric approach to care is also needed.

## PROCESS

The following phases of PFAC development must be considered:

- (1) Inception and idea
- (2) Stakeholder identification and buy-in from leaders
- (3) Medical/health care team members acting as Liaisons
- (4) Promotion and outreach
- (5) Recruitment of patient/family/caregiver Advisors
- (6) Identification of projects and goal-setting
- (7) Evaluation and maintenance



Represents the groups of individuals needed to form a PFAC. Advisors = patients/family/caregivers; Liaisons = medical center faculty/staff; Executive Sponsor = administrator/leadership.

## BARRIERS & LESSONS LEARNED

Barriers to effective and long-term PFAC implementation exist. The need for patient-centered care champions is imperative and continued engagement from patients and caregivers is necessary. It can be a difficult task for PFAC organizers to pursue initiatives without the commitment from patient/family Advisors and medical center Liaisons. Active participation and attendance at meetings is critical. Identifying the right Executive Sponsor (ES) for a PFAC is also crucial. This individual acts and advocates on the PFAC's behalf to continue the patient-centric work and to mitigate any hurdles that may arise. The ES also allocates resources for key projects when necessary.

Recruitment of engaged Advisors is an ongoing process. Development of a website for PFAC information and easy application should help with recruitment - <https://tinyurl.com/y8gkelzq>.

A successful PFAC needs individuals who are devoted and passionate about its existence. Identifying Advisors to volunteer as Chair/Co-Chairs has been a slow process. PFAC organizers continue to discuss the role of Chair and encourage Advisors to step up. PFACs should be run by Advisors with Liaisons acting in a supportive capacity and connecting Advisors' ideas to cancer quality improvement projects.

## PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Key NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Cancer Center PFAC initiatives:

- Patient advocacy and empowerment video
- Integration into oncology workgroups
- Goal setting and project identification
- Alignment with Advisors' values and priorities
- Infusion Center waiting room improvements
- Contribution to informational booklet for new patients
- Ongoing recruitment efforts