

## Introduction

After watching the video of Janice's experience as a new Caregiver Advisor to the Youth Program Committee, what do you think could have been done differently to welcome Janice to the committee and show that her input is valued? To answer this question, look at the following excerpts from Janice's first meeting and **rate** which alternative action, in your opinion, would have created the strongest, strong and weakest opportunity to improve Janice's experience. Answers to each question can be found on the following page.

Question Topics:

**1 – Introductions**

**2 – Inexperienced**

**3 – Uninformed**

**4 – Unprepared**

**5 – Lack of Clarity**

**6 – Overlooked**



## 1. Introductions

**Janice:** [Was I supposed to share that much? It would help if I knew what these characters did... job titles would be helpful.]

When Janice was asked to introduce herself at the start of the meeting, she felt uncertain of how much to say. Which of the following scenarios addresses Janice's concerns most effectively?

**Please rate these answers:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a. The Chair could have introduced her. The Chair introduces Janice and all other members by name.  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b> |
| b. Prior to the meeting, a Staff Liaison asks Janice how she would like to be introduced, or whether she feels comfortable introducing herself similarly to others attending the meeting. | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b> |
| c. The Chair begins the meeting with an ice breaker exercise as part of the introductions to familiarize Janice with the other members.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b> |



## ANSWERS

- A. Weak:** Having the Chair introduce Janice would not have helped her feel more prepared for the meeting or comfortable speaking during the meeting. This could limit the feeling of inclusion necessary for her to become a contributing member of the team.
- B. Strong:** By informing Janice of expectations in advance, she would have likely felt more welcome and confident that she was considered a member of the team. It would have also provided her an opportunity to address questions she might have, prior to the meeting.
- C. Strongest:** Employing an ice breaker exercise as part of the introductions could have provided the opportunity for Janice and the other members to become more familiar with one another before the meeting got underway., Asking the same questions of all committee members (e.g., your name, role/title, and your favourite season) would have started everyone off on the same foot. If time limitations or group size are an issue, asking for name and role/title would be sufficient.



## 2. Inexperienced

**Janice:** [Wish I knew about the youth program... my son is in the mood disorders program]

When Janice was asked what she thought of the new form, she felt she lacked the personal experience needed to give an informed opinion. Which of the following scenarios addresses Janice's concerns most effectively?

**Please rate these answers:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>a.</b> Prior to assigning Janice to the committee, the Staff Liaison receives a detailed request for a Caregiver Advisor from the Youth Program Committee. Among other things the request includes the committee's purpose and goals. This information is discussed with Janice prior to her first meeting to make sure she feels comfortable being an advisor on the committee.</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |
| <p><b>b.</b> The organization uses a Skills Matching Program to ensure that the request for volunteer Caregiver Advisors from the Youth Program matches Janice's experience.</p>   | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |
| <p><b>c.</b> All Caregiver Advisors are expected to be trained to fill positions on any committee.</p>   | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |



## ANSWERS

- A. Strongest:** One of the benefits of conducting a pre-first meeting preparation session with new Caregiver Advisors is to ensure they are comfortable with their new role on a specific committee. Discussing the goals and purpose of the committee will allow the candidate to decide if they will be a “good fit.”
  
- B. Strong:** A Skills Matching Program is a great place to start when recruiting a Caregiver Advisor for a specific position. However, it’s still important to review the commitment with the candidate to be sure that they are comfortable before they accept the placement.
  
- C. Weak:** Seasoned Caregiver Advisors may have a broader range of experience that gives them the confidence to apply their skills to a variety of situations. However, this is an unrealistic expectation for new Caregiver Advisors and can have negative consequences for the collaborative relationship.



### 3. Uninformed

**Janice:** [What in the world are EMRs and HQOs?]

During the meeting, acronyms were used that Janice did not understand. Which of the following scenarios would address Janice’s concerns most effectively?

**Please rate these answers:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>a.</b> Staff agree not to use acronyms in meetings that involve Caregiver Advisors. If they forget during the meeting, there is a mutual agreement that someone will step up to explain the acronym used.</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |
| <p><b>b.</b> Important terms and acronyms are discussed during orientation.</p>   | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |
| <p><b>c.</b> Janice is given a commonly used acronyms list. At the beginning of each meeting, the Chair requests that committee members avoid the use of acronyms and explain any acronym that is used.</p>         | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |



## ANSWERS

- A. Strong:** Having the staff agree to not use acronyms and offer to explain them if they are used, helps create a culture where it is acceptable to ask questions. This can make the Caregiver Advisors feel more comfortable and encourage them to ask for clarification.
  
- B. Weak:** Covering commonly used terms and acronyms during the orientation session can be helpful but, due to the amount of material that must be covered, it may be difficult to remember them by the time a real meeting comes along.
  
- C. Strongest:** Caregiver Advisors should be given a list of important terms and acronyms. At the start of each meeting, the Chair should ask committee members to avoid the use of acronyms, if possible, and give a gentle reminder during the meeting if need be. This helps to create a culture where it is acceptable to ask questions. It also gives Caregiver Advisors the knowledge they need to participate fully.







## 4. Unprepared

**Janice:** [Wish I had a chance to look these over before the meeting... I guess caregivers weren't included until now.

During the meeting, the group discussed the new forms. Unfortunately, these documents were not sent to Janice prior to the meeting. This not only detracted from her presence at the meeting, but it made her feel as though her input as a caregiver was only included when the forms were already completed. Which of the following scenarios addresses Janice's concerns most effectively?

**Please rate these answers:**

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| a. The Chair delivers the material a few days before.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Weak      |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongest |
| b. The Chair tells her "not to worry about it" for her first meeting.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Weak      |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongest |
| c. The Chair or another committee member gets together privately with Janice prior to the meeting to summarize the committee's progress and explain the lack of a Caregiver Advisor before now. | <input type="checkbox"/> Weak      |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongest |



## ANSWERS

- A. Strong:** By receiving the information a few days before the meeting, Janice would have been able to review the meeting minutes in advance. This would have avoided her having to hurriedly scan the minutes and look unprepared. She would have had the option to contact the Chair privately and ask about the lack of a Caregiver Advisor from the beginning of the project.
- B. Weak:** While it is realistic to expect that it will take Janice some time to become familiar with the committee before becoming too involved, she still must be given the tools required to succeed in her position. At a bare minimum, this would include receiving the meeting materials in advance.
- C. Strongest:** While Janice should also have received the meeting materials in advance, having someone reach out before the meeting with some background on the Committee would have helped her feel more knowledgeable and confident. This would also be the time to answer any of Janice's questions (i.e., why the position of Caregiver Advisor had not been filled previously).



## 5. Lack of Clarity

**Janice:** [Am I allowed to vote?]

When a vote was called to accept the revisions of the form, Janice was uncertain if she was allowed to vote as an equal member. Which of the following scenarios addresses Janice's concerns most effectively?

**Please rate these answers:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>a.</b> Meeting protocols and the expectations of Janice's role are discussed with her prior to her first meeting. | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b>      |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b>    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b> |
| <b>b.</b> The Chair asks Janice specifically to vote with them.  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b>      |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b>    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b> |
| <b>c.</b> Janice asks if she should vote during the meeting.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b>      |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b>    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b> |



## ANSWERS

- A. Strongest:** Discussing Janice’s role with her before the meeting could have clearly established her responsibilities and what was expected of her as a Caregiver Advisor. Committee Meeting protocols, such as the Terms of Reference, should always be given to the Caregiver Advisor in advance. In addition, a staff person should be assigned to answer process questions that the Caregiver Advisor might have after a meeting.
  
- B. Strong:** By mentioning Janice specifically, the Chair would have clearly included Janice in the vote. However, she may have felt singled out and still unclear about her voting privileges in future meetings.
  
- C. Weak:** Relying on Janice to voice her concerns or ask questions could leave her feeling ignored and unimportant. New Caregiver Advisors will only ask questions if they feel comfortable doing so. This can be a challenge when one is a new member of an existing committee.



## 6. Overlooked

**Janice:** [I don't have a sitter on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Who cares, I doubt they'll miss me.]

When a new date was suggested for the next meeting, Janice was unable to attend. The other members seemed unconcerned about how the new date impacted her schedule and did not offer an alternative. Which of the following scenarios addresses Janice's concerns most effectively?

**Please rate these answers:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>a.</b> The Chair suggests that establishing the next meeting time by sending out a Doodle poll, giving non-staff members time to check their schedule and select a time that works best for them.</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |
| <p><b>b.</b> If Janice does not attend, she is sent the minutes from the meeting and a notice of the next meeting date.</p>   | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |
| <p><b>c.</b> An alternative format to receiving Janice's input is suggested.</p>  | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weak</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strong</b><br/><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongest</b></p> |



## ANSWERS

- A. Strongest:** As the only Caregiver Advisor on the committee, Janice provides a unique perspective that is vital to represent the needs of Caregiver Advisors. Without her attendance, this perspective would be lost. Ensuring that she can attend the meetings is an important 'best practice' when it comes to Caregiver Advisor engagement.
  
- B. Weak:** Janice is there to provide valuable input from a caregiver's perspective. By only providing her with the meeting minutes, she is unable to contribute. This could make her feel like the "token caregiver" on the committee. There is also a risk that Janice will feel far less inclined to become fully engaged.
  
- C. Strong:** While Janice may not be able to attend the next meeting in person, there are other ways to capture her input. For example, Janice could be sent the agenda and other meeting materials and asked that she send her comments to the Chair to present at the next meeting. Or Janice can be invited to attend virtually via Zoom or the telephone.

