



Using Appreciative Inquiry to the relationship between **family caregivers (Family Council)** and the **long-term care (LTC) team**.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Framework

The document explains that AI is a **strength-based approach** for change. Instead of focusing on problems, it asks: *“What is working well, and how can we do more of that?”* It uses the **4-D cycle**:

1. **Discovery** – Identify strengths and successes.
2. **Dream** – Envision what is possible.
3. **Design** – Co-create structures and processes to achieve that vision.
4. **Delivery/Destiny** – Commit to actions that sustain positive change

Using-Appreciative-inquiry

Vancouver Coastal Association of Family Councils 2024 Education Session on Appreciative Inquiry as the framework of choice for Family Councils to use when planning conversations with senior leadership: <https://vancouvercoastalfamilycouncils.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/December-14-VCAFC-Education-Lunch-and-Learn-11.pdf>





Applying AI to Family Caregiver–LTC Team Relationships

1. Discovery Phase – Recognizing Strengths

- **Family caregivers** bring intimate knowledge of the resident's history, routines, and preferences.
- **LTC staff** bring clinical skills, experience, and structured care systems.
- Together, their shared strengths include compassion, advocacy, and commitment to resident well-being.
👉 Action: Hold storytelling sessions where staff and caregivers share examples of “when collaboration worked best.”

2. Dream Phase – Envisioning the Ideal Relationship

- Imagine LTC as a place where **caregivers are partners, not just visitors**.
- Caregivers and staff envision seamless communication, mutual trust, and shared decision-making.
👉 Action: Jointly draft a “vision statement”
(e.g., “Every family member is a valued voice in the care team” or “family caregivers and staff caregivers are the dream team”).

3. Design Phase – Building Structures and Processes

- Co-create strategies that make the dream practical:
 - **Communication pathways** (e.g., regular caregiver–nurse check-ins, shared care notes).
 - **Role clarification** (caregivers understand their supportive role; staff respect lived knowledge of families, families inquire about care learning opportunities, etc.).
 - **Collaborative leadership** (inviting caregivers into quality-improvement discussions, committees, surveys, policy-making conversations, process review, etc.).
👉 Action: Pilot a monthly caregiver–team huddle in one LTC unit.



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4. Delivery/Destiny Phase – Sustaining Positive Change

- Commit to small but ongoing practices that embed caregiver partnership:
 - Celebrating “success stories” of caregiver–staff collaboration.
 - Recognize staff caregivers formally (thank-you notes, newsletters, staff recognition program, etc.).
 - Embedding family caregiver feedback loops into LTC quality systems.
 - 👉 Action: Develop a continuous improvement cycle where family feedback is reviewed quarterly with the team.

Key Takeaway

By reframing the caregiver–LTC team relationship through **Appreciative Inquiry**, the focus shifts from “problems to fix” to “strengths to grow.” This approach:

- Validates family caregivers as essential partners.
- Strengthens trust and mutual respect.
- Creates a culture of shared responsibility for resident well-being.

Here is a **step-by-step Appreciative Inquiry (AI) workshop outline** tailored for strengthening the **relationship between family caregivers and long-term care (LTC) teams**. You can use this as a template for an in-person or virtual session.

Appreciative Inquiry Workshop Outline

Theme: *“Building Strong Partnerships Between Family Caregivers and the Long-Term Care Team”*

Duration: 1-1.5 hours (flexible)

Participants: Family caregivers, nurses, care aides, managers, allied health staff



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1. Welcome & Framing (5 min)

- **Facilitator message:** “Today, we’re here not to talk about problems, but about what already works and how we can build more of it.”
- **Ground rules:** Respect, active listening, no judgment.
- **Icebreaker:** Invite each person to share *one word* that describes what “partnership” means to them.

2. Discovery Phase – “What’s Working Well?” (10 min)

Purpose: Identify strengths and positive stories.

- **Activity:** In pairs (one caregiver + one staff), share a story: “*Tell me about a time when family–staff collaboration really worked for a resident.*”
- **Group reflection:** Capture key themes on a board or flipchart (e.g., *trust, open communication, quick response*).

3. Dream Phase – “What Could Be?” (15 min)

Purpose: Envision the ideal future.

- **Activity:** Small groups draw or write their “dream LTC partnership.”
 - Example prompts: “*To get to the point where everything worked at its best, what would families and staff prioritize?*”
- **Report back:** Each group presents its vision in 1–2 minutes.

4. Design Phase – “How Do We Get There?” (15 min)

Purpose: Co-create practical ways to achieve the dream.

- **Activity:** Mixed groups brainstorm concrete actions under three headings:
 1. **Communication**
 2. **Involvement**
 3. **Recognition**
- **Prioritization:** Each group votes on their top 1-2 ideas.



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5. Delivery/Destiny Phase – “Making It Stick” (15 min)

Purpose: Turn ideas into commitments.

- **Action planning:**
 - Assign champions (staff + caregiver pairs).
 - Define first steps (e.g., “pilot monthly caregiver–team huddle in __(month)”).
 - Decide how progress will be reviewed (quarterly check-in?).

6. Closing & Celebration (5 min)

- **Reflection circle:** Each participant shares one takeaway or commitment.
- **Closing quote suggestion:** *“In every system something works — let’s do more of what works.”*

Materials Needed

- Flipcharts or whiteboards
- Markers and sticky notes
- Optional: projector for digital notes
- Handout: AI 4-D cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design, Delivery)

👉 This workshop keeps the process **positive, structured, and action-oriented**, while ensuring both caregivers and staff co-create the future together.