

## Alliant Health Solutions' Beneficiary & Family Advisory Council Empowers People with Medicare and Their Caregivers Through Informed Healthcare Decision-Making

In the decade since its founding, Alliant Health Solutions' (Alliant) Beneficiary & Family Advisory Council (BFAC) has played a significant role in the organization's mission to make health care better. The council consists of 11 volunteers over the age of 55 from across the Southeast whose primary objective is to ensure people with Medicare and their caregivers have the necessary tools and resources to make well-informed health decisions. Council members are part of the targeted age group for many of Alliant's resources and some even reside in long-term care facilities.

As a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO), Alliant develops patient-facing tools, [resources and videos](#) for nursing homes and partnerships for community health in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina and Tennessee. These resources are carefully reviewed by the BFAC to ensure they are beneficial, relevant and informative for their intended audience.

While some of the BFAC members have a background in health care, their assessment of Alliant's materials is based on their personal experiences caring for a loved one or being a patient.

"When my dad died in 2001, I was only 35 years old and became a full-time caretaker for my mom, who had Lewy body dementia and palsy," said BFAC member Kim McRae.

That experience led McRae, now 57, to become a champion for improving the quality of life for seniors and caregivers.

"I don't have a clinical background and I've never worked in a nursing home or long-term care facility, but I've always been a champion for the consumers and residents and care partners. I try to help the professionals remember what it's like for them," she said.

Alliant hosts monthly Zoom meetings during which the BFAC reviews draft projects and provides feedback to staff. According to BFAC member Peggy Haddock, 76, the council's insight is honest and straightforward.

"Nobody spares their words," she said. "Many of us on the council have been through things or cared for someone, so we'll let (Alliant staff) know if anyone is going to use a resource."

Rhonda Allison, 63, who has served on the council for eight years, said she enjoys volunteering with the BFAC because it aligns with her passion for advocacy. In addition to the BFAC, she also volunteers with a long-term care ombudsman program.

"Because I'm out advocating for (nursing home) residents, I like to know what's going on with Medicare and bring some of the tools to the bedside," she said.

Allison said one project she enjoyed working on was creating resources on the importance of the flu shot.

"The first time I ever got a flu shot was when I worked on the flu project," she said. "It's nice when you get to work on a special project. It gives me a chance to connect with the (Alliant) staff."

In addition to collaborating with Alliant staff, BFAC members bring fresh ideas and occasionally lend their talent to voiceover work on Alliant's educational videos. Their voices can be heard on Alliant's [cardiac rehab](#), [smoking cessation](#) and [COVID-19](#) videos, to name a few.

"It's fun doing the videos," said 75-year-old BFAC member Charlotte Ingram. "I did a lot of theater in college, so I got to use my old experiences."

BFAC member Jeana Partington, 62, said she believes the BFAC is crucial to improving health care outcomes for patients.

"As an advocate for patients and care partners, it's important to ensure the information is valuable to them and can be understood," she said. "We ensure the materials that Alliant creates are the best resources for patients."



An image from the August 2023 meeting of the Alliant Beneficiary & Family Advisory Council (BFAC).

First row, from left: Melody Brown, Alliant Georgia State Manager and BFAC organizer; Tracie Troha, Alliant Communications Editorial Assistant; Jeana Partington, BFAC member; Amy Ward, Alliant Patient Safety Manager.

Second row, from left: Peggy Haddock, BFAC member; Carolyn Kazdan, IPRO Senior Director, Health Care Quality Improvement; Kim McRae, BFAC member; JoVonn Givens, Alliant Task Order Director.

Third row, from left: Natasha Avery, Alliant Sr. Executive Director, State & Federal Programs.

Not pictured: Jen Hurley, Alliant contractor and BFAC members Joyce Horn and Renee DelMonico.

Submitted by: Alliant Health Solutions

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