



**Strengthening Oklahoma's Safety Net,
One Community At A Time**

Board Bulletin

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The CHC Board and the Outside World

Relationships with Health Center Staff

Successful health center boards have an open, honest working relationship with the center's CEO or Executive Director - the board's one employee. The CEO serves as the primary communication link between the center's board and staff. The board instructs their employee, the CEO, regarding health center policies and the CEO oversees the staff to make sure established board policies are properly implemented. Board members should not discuss health center matters with any staff member except the CEO. If board members individually discuss health center issues with staff members, they are subjecting the entire board to valid lawsuits due to violation of established policy.

Relationships with Health Center Funders

While the board is not expected to know details of all funding arrangements, the board is responsible for knowing: who the funders are; the basic 'rules' established by various funders; potential impact of changes in funding; and how to educate and inform health center funders. Health centers, primarily supported by the Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC), should have a strong relationship with their assigned Project Officer, who assists the center in complying with requirements and reporting procedures in order to continue to qualify for BPHC funds. Because grant applications are signed by the board chair, the board is responsible for ensuring that the health center fulfills the grant activities for which they have been funded.

Educating/Informing Public Policymakers

The board serves as the health center's advocate and must have an understanding of how changes in the political and social environment can impact changes in Federal and State funding policies. Educating and informing policymakers involves making visits to state and federal legislators and making phone calls to voice position on legislation. The board, as a group, can write letters to newspaper editors and mobilize community members to advocate on behalf of the health center. A very effective strategy is to invite a legislator or policymaker to visit the center. Note: Boards must understand the distinction between educating/informing and lobbying, an activity for which federal funds cannot be used. OPCA offers Grassroots Advocacy Training and would welcome the opportunity to visit your board on this subject.

Please take a few moments and complete the brief attachment and return via fax (405-424-1111) or e-mail jgrant@okpca.org. If you have questions or want further information, please contact OPCA as listed below.

_____ Would you like more information on Grassroots Advocacy Training?
How long have you been a board member? _____ years

_____ Did you know that the entire board could be sued if one board member speaks individually with CHC staff regarding health center issues?

_____ Did you know the Board, by signing grant applications, is accountable to the federal government (and other funders) to ensure that the health center fulfills funded grants?

Oklahoma Primary Care Association

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Primary source for OPCA Board Bulletins is the Governing Board Handbook, 2000 developed by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC), Bethesda, Maryland. Funded by HRSA/BPHC.