



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

## **Board Bulletin**

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### **Clinical Leadership: Key to Quality Improvement**

As health centers strive to become 'providers of choice' in their marketplace, boards should pay particular attention to the clinical leadership to ensure that high quality health care is being provided to the community. BPHC PIN 98-23 states, "Health centers must have effective clinical and administrative leadership, systems and procedures to guide the provision of services, and ongoing quality improvement programs to ensure continuous performance improvement." Having a mission-minded clinical director who can motivate staff to pursue excellence is key to the health center's success. Health center boards must outline the expectations for the Clinical Director to their one employee, the center's Chief Executive, then monitor that clinical expectations are being fulfilled. The Chief Executive should retain authority to select and dismiss the Clinical Director in accordance with health center policy adopted by the board.

#### ***The Clinical Director: A Wearer of Many Hats***

In most cases, responsibilities for the position are split between providing health care and serving as the Clinical Director for the health center. The Clinical Director position is multi-faceted and requires an individual who can multi-task. Some of the many hats a Clinical Director must wear include:

- **Leader** - The Clinical Director must possess leadership, management and interpersonal skills - willing to work closely with other members of the management team. According to BPHC PIN 98-23, health centers with small programs may use a non-physician Clinical Director. However, in most marketplaces, a physician Clinical Director is essential to effectively position the health center in the community.
- **Mission Protector** - The Clinical Director must embrace the mission of the health center and energize the clinical staff to do the same. The Clinical Director must always represent the best interests of the health center, its patients and the community served. Because of this, it is preferred that the Clinical Director be directly employed by the health center.
- **Clinical Manager** - All health center clinicians - whether employees, contractors or volunteers - must be managed by the Clinical Director to ensure a coordinated system of care. All providers, whether directly employed or contracted, are subject to the health center's quality improvement and risk management guidelines and requirements; and any data reporting requirements. It is crucial that the Clinical Director be able to effectively communicate the need for provider productivity and quality improvement activities to the health center clinician team. The Clinical Director must also be viewed as a respected voice for the clinicians when presenting concerns to health center management and the board.
- **Relationship Builder** - Health centers can no longer operate in isolation and must work with other providers in the community to be successful. One expectation of the Clinical Director should be to establish, strengthen and negotiate relationships between the health center and other clinicians, provider organizations and payers in the marketplace. Community members must value the quality of services delivered for health center sustainability and longevity.
- **Visionary** - The Clinical Director should be an integral part of health center strategic planning - leading in development of health care goals and objectives that will contribute to the desired outcomes of availability, affordability, accessibility, quality, comprehensiveness and coordination.

To be a premier provider of health care, health center boards should invest the resources necessary to ensure clinical operations are being directed by a solid Clinical Director with the skill set necessary for the job. Please visit OPCA's website, [www.okpca.org](http://www.okpca.org), and select 'CHC Boards' for more information.

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