



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

Board Bulletin

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Recruiting and Retaining Board Members

To be in compliance with Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) Health Center Program Expectations as outlined in Policy Information Notice (PIN) 98-23, community health center (CHC) boards must have at least 9 and no more than 25 board members. Finding 9 people who are willing to serve on a volunteer board can prove challenging. Concerned citizens are eager to help but only when they see the value of the organization and a return on investment for their time. CHC boards must take steps to ensure that they govern smoothly and have sound structure to recruit and retain volunteer members.

What Prospective Board Members Should Know Before They Say 'Yes'

- ◆ **Mission Buy-In** - Prospective board members must believe in the mission as it is the guiding force of the organization. Mission-driven board members are crucial to CHC success.
- ◆ **Bylaws** - Because the bylaws are the organizational rules, prospective board members should carefully study the bylaws before agreeing to serve. Understanding the rules is paramount to serving on a board. Oklahoma Senate Bill 708 requires that Oklahoma CHCs receiving state funding must have open board meetings. Boards unfamiliar with their own bylaws are easy prey for public watchdogs.
- ◆ **Duty-Bound** - As stewards, board members are required to practice duty of care, loyalty and obedience. *Duty of care* - must exercise the same level of judgment that any other competent and prudent person would in a similar situation, including maintaining confidentiality. *Duty of loyalty* - give undivided allegiance to the health center when making decisions; avoid conflicts of interest. *Duty of obedience* - be faithful to the health center's mission, carefully follow bylaws and protect the 'public trust'.
- ◆ **Compliant** - Federal funds come with strings. CHCs depend on 330 grant funds and associated benefits (e.g., FTCA malpractice coverage, enhanced Medicaid/Medicare reimbursement, 340B Drug Pricing Program). Board members must be willing to uphold all federal and state regulations to protect CHC resources.

How To Retain Qualified Members

- ◆ **Corporate Culture** - Create a culture of excellence. People want to be associated with winning teams - make sure your board and health center fit the bill. The whole organization, including the board, must be committed to achieving and sustaining a culture of excellence.
- ◆ **Effective Meetings** - Time is such a precious commodity in today's fast-paced world that very few people can afford to spend it unwisely. If you want to retain qualified board members, the meetings must be orderly and effective. Otherwise, people will take their talents elsewhere if meetings become burdensome.
- ◆ **Encourage Participation** - Recognize each individual on the board and their viewpoint as important. Do not let overpowering personalities drown out those less apt to talk, making them feel their opinion is unwanted and without worth. Introverts do not readily verbalize opinions but may have the 'pearl of wisdom' needed to solve the issues at hand if encouraged to participate.
- ◆ **Use Committees Wisely** - Committees are designed to make board work efficient and used to streamline meetings. Committees should make use of the varying expertise of each member so thorough research can be conducted to provide appropriate recommendations to the full board. Health center bylaws outline committee structure but there are limitations to committee power. Committees *can* investigate and research, report, and make recommendations. Committees *cannot* set policy, act on their own, or interfere with the daily operations of the CHC. Once recommendations are made to the board, members should ask sufficient questions to determine what decisions must be made to satisfy their CHC stewardship obligations. Boards should refrain from rehashing every detail of the committee work. The goal is to save time - not waste it.

To review OPCA's entire *Board Bulletin* series, visit the 'CHC Boards' section of www.okpca.org.

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