

The Great Community Health Center ...and thoughts on how to get there

Governance

The major theme was that board members in a great health center add value far beyond sitting at board and committee meetings. They connect the clinic to community resources, give and get money, and provide active stewardship of mission, passion, and results for patients. The elements seen as most critical to a great board were the relationship of board members and the CEO and the relationship of board members to each other. These factors were put well ahead of bylaws, formats for meetings, or other process or structural factors.

- The board has a collaborative relationship with the CEO. The CEO does not lecture the board or feel the need to spend all their time educating them. They respect and engage board time, talent, and resources. The board does not manage or get involved with management decisions.
- As with staff, the best interests and outcomes for patients are the primary criteria of all decisions made based on understanding of different roles. The board does not manage and the director does not set policy. This relationship is supported by a meaningful annual achievement review.
- Board members provide strong links to community resources. They are not only the “eyes and ears” to the community but actively look for all ways to forge new connections and to imbed the health center in a community context.
- Board members respect and listen well to each other. Individual egos and prerogatives (whether professional or community in origin) do not get in the way of effective discussion and decision making and the interests of patient health is always put first.
- The board sees stewardship of results to be of equal importance as stewardship of finance and compliance. They continually ask questions about health outcomes for people served.
- Board has an effective annual review with CEO based on clear targets for achievement set at the start of each year. The board actively rehires the CEO at the end of contract periods and has at all times a succession plan in mind.
- There is also a succession plan for board leadership and sufficient rotation to get new board members and existing newer or younger board members into different roles, including representing the CHC at community and professional meetings. In great boards, no form of “the old guard” dominates.