



Appalachian Healthcare  
Legal Consulting, PLLC

**Welcome  
Aboard!**

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**Orienting Board Members  
So They Don't Jump Ship**



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# Introductions

Who is attending as:

- A board member?
- An administrator or staff member?



Who is attending from a non-profit organization?

Who is attending from a community health center?

Who is attending from a local health department?

# Learning Objectives

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01



Learn how onboarding can play a pivotal role in board member retention, development, compliance, and engagement.

02



Learn how orientation can empower board members and familiarize them with the unique oversight responsibilities and expectations of healthcare boards.

03



Receive tips and tools for building, maintaining, and improving the onboarding process for board members.

\*The information in this presentation does not constitute legal advice and is for general informational purposes only. Attendees should contact their attorney to obtain advice with respect to any particular legal matter.



# What is Onboarding?

- Onboarding is the process of integrating a new board member into the organization and introducing them to the organization's structure, culture, mission, and values **prior** to attending their first board meeting.
- It helps new board members understand their role and responsibilities and prepares them for what to expect.
- It provides new board members with resources and support and familiarizes them with key staff, organization policy, and financials.
- It can lead to higher board member engagement, increased productivity, and reduced turnover.



# A Chance to Show Appreciation

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# Healthcare Boards are Unique

- Healthcare boards oversee organizations with highly complex regulatory and legal standards.
- Boards are comprised of individuals with a variety of non-healthcare related backgrounds and trainings.
- Some organizations, like community health centers, have boards made up primarily of “user” or patient members. Others, like local boards of health must vary in occupation.
- Expecting them to have pre-existing knowledge and understanding of healthcare regulations is unrealistic.
- An educated and engaged governing Board is an asset to the organization and/or community.

# Nonprofit Board Onboarding Statistics

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- In 2017 Heidrick & Struggles/George Mason University Law School surveyed 500+ nonprofit board members and released a report titled “Association and Nonprofit Boards: Maximizing Effective Service.”
- 53% of respondents reported that their organization had an onboarding process for new directors.
- Only 46% of the respondents said that their onboarding experience properly prepared them to be effective board members.
- 36% did not meet with the senior leadership of the organization before the first board meeting.



# **“Pre-Boarding,” Tours, and Introductions**

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# Pre-Boarding

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**Send the new Board member a formal welcome letter congratulating them and providing initial information.**



**Distribute a packet with key documents like a brief history of the organization, its mission statement, and information about some of its programs or initiatives.**



**Consider a public announcement regarding the new board member (via social media, office email, or local paper).**



# Sample Welcome Letter

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May 2, 2025

Mr. Joe Board Member  
123 Main Street.  
Huntington, WV 25701

Dear Joe,

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors and staff at AHLC, I am delighted to welcome you as the newest member of our Board. Your experience, insight, and commitment to our mission will be a tremendous asset as we continue our work to provide legal and compliance guidance to rural healthcare entities.

We deeply value the time and expertise that board members contribute to guiding our organization. As a board member, you will play a vital role in shaping our strategic direction, ensuring strong governance, and helping us build the resources necessary to expand our impact.

In the coming days, you will receive a Board Orientation Packet containing important materials including our bylaws, recent financial statements, program updates, and meeting schedules. We will also be in touch to schedule an orientation meeting to help familiarize you with our work and introduce you to the team.

We are excited to collaborate with you and are confident that your contributions will help strengthen our efforts and bring new energy to our initiatives. Thank you for joining us in this important work.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions as you get settled into your new role.

Warm regards,

Jenna Misiti

# **Tour and Introductions**

Consider bringing new board members to the administrative office prior to the first Board meeting for formal orientation and to meet the key executive and management staff.

# Who Should Be Involved?

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- CEO/Executive Director
- Key Executive Staff Members (CFO, COO, CMO, Compliance Officer, for example)
- Board Chair, if available
- Any other board members who may be interested in a refresher





# Board Mentors

- Consider utilizing a new/existing board member mentor system where you connect new board members with tenured board members.
- This gives them a point of contact and a designated space to ask questions.
- Ask existing board members to reach out via email to welcome the new member.

# **Orientation Topics**

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# Introduce Them to the “Why” of the Entity

- What is the board’s primary function or responsibility?
- Example: Board of Pharmacy
  - The “why” is to protect the public.
- Example: Local health department boards
  - The “why” is promoting health and preventing disease, injury, and disability for the community.
- If you are a non-profit, look to your organization’s mission for this answer.

# General Board Responsibilities

- Educate board members regarding their fiduciary responsibilities, such as care, loyalty, and obedience.
- Educate on conflicts of interest:
  - What they are;
  - How to recognize them; and
  - What to do if a potential conflict exists.
- What is the relationship between the Board and the CEO or Executive Director? What are the responsibilities of each?
- Educate on expectations for financial oversight.

# Fiduciary Responsibilities

- Make clear that Board members are fiduciaries who act on behalf of the entity, putting its interests ahead of their own.
- This includes showing:
  - **Care:** Making informed and good faith decisions in performing their duties.
  - **Loyalty:** Never furthering personal interests at the expense of the entity.
  - **Obedience:** Being faithful to the entity's mission and scope.

# Conflicts of Interest

- **Conflict definition**

- Oxford Dictionary Definition: “A situation in which a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity.”
- Provide your organization’s policy language.

- **How to recognize them**

- Provide examples of potential conflicts to your board members.

- **What to do if a potential conflict exists**

- When and how the board member should recuse themselves from discussion (including leaving the room, when necessary).

# Relationship Between Board and CEO/ED

- What is the relationship between the Board and the CEO (or local health officer for local health boards)?
- Providing a job description for each role can be helpful in differentiating roles and responsibilities.
- It's not uncommon for board members without proper direction to think they have either more power or less power than they do in their positions.

# Governance vs. Management

- The Board is responsible for **governance**:
  - High-level oversight, not day-to-day management
  - Approving By-laws and key policies
  - Ensuring its own functioning through effective meetings and committees
  - Supporting a positive reputation for the organization
- Big picture vs. “getting in the weeds”



# How do Board responsibilities compare to those of management?

## CEO/Executive Director responsibilities include:



**Day-to-day operations**



**Acting as liaison between staff and Board**



**Operationalizing policies and long-term goals established by the Board**



**Hiring/maintaining full authority over staff, including evaluation and dismissal**



**Identifying and resolving problems**



**Interacting with the community**

# Financial Oversight

- Review recent financials with new board members.
- Give overview or cheat sheet to board members on how to read and understand organizational financial statements.
- Board members should be informed on the financials of the organization, monitoring financial performance against previously established targets.
- This should include monthly reports to the Board containing balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements.
- Link to Propel NonProfits Balance Sheet Cheat Sheet Resource:  
<https://propelnonprofits.org/resources/balance-sheet-cheat-sheet/>

# What to Expect During Meetings

- Are the meetings in-person or virtual?
- How often are the meetings and how long do they last?
- How far in advance are the meeting materials sent to board members?
- What items/topics are regularly on the agenda?
- What approach do the meetings follow? For example, Robert's Rules of Order.
- What board committees are available and when do they meet?



## **Healthcare Specific Topics**

- . Common healthcare terms and acronyms
- . Healthcare compliance
- . Patient privacy and confidentiality
- . Credentialing and privileging

# Health Department Boards

- West Virginia local boards of health are governed by state law and are responsible for directing, supervising, and carrying out matters related to public health of their respective counties and municipalities.
- This “empowers local communities to carry out core public health activities necessary to promote health and prevent disease, injury, and disability for their citizens.” – West Virginia Center for Local Health
- West Virginia local boards of health are organized the under WV Code Chapter 16 Article 2.



## **§16-2-1. Purpose**

This article establishes uniform provisions applicable to all local boards of health... to ensure the consistent performance of duties relating to basic public health services and other health services and the enforcement of the laws of this state pertaining to public health.

# WV Code §16-2-11: Powers and Duties

- This Code section first includes items that the local boards of health “shall” do, such as community health promotion, immunizations, and communicable disease prevention and control.
- The Code section then includes items that a local board of health “may” do, such as providing primary care services and employing staff or entering into contracts for services or adopting rules.
- For onboarding of local boards of health, these provisions should be provided so the members can be familiar with them even prior to the first meetings.



# Onboarding Packets

- **Include items such as:**
  - The organization's mission, vision, and values;
  - Organizational Bylaws;
  - Board member position description;
  - Common industry acronyms;
  - Key policies (e.g. conflicts of interest, confidentiality);
  - Organizational chart;
  - General budget and financial statement information;
  - A list of board members and their contact information;
  - Board minutes for the previous 3-6 months;
  - The most recent strategic plan; and
  - Committee assignments and descriptions.

# **Ongoing Engagement, Development, and Follow-Up**

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**“Tell me and I forget,  
teach me and I may remember,  
involve me and I learn.”  
– Unknown**



# Ongoing Engagement

- Onboarding is not a one-day process. It requires ongoing integration and engagement.
- Regularly check in with new members to provide ongoing support and to receive feedback on their experience.
- Evaluate your onboarding process based on this feedback and make adjustments as needed for future board members.
- Continue to develop your board members' knowledge and skills.

# Ongoing Engagement Ideas



**Continue to check in with new board members and see if there is anything they need.**



**Utilize mentors or experienced board members.**



**Implement ongoing trainings for continued board development.**

# Development and Training Topics

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**Financial literacy**



**Key policies and procedures**



**Board roles and responsibilities**



**Conflicts of interest**



**Specific industry area training**

# Signs of Engaged Board Members



**They consistently show up to meetings.**



**They ask questions.**



**They are well-prepared.**



**They have candid discussions.**



**They show mutual trust and respect.**

# Engagement Discussion Questions

1. Do you feel you understand your role as a Board member for your organization?
2. Do you feel your Board is effective?
3. What challenges do you face in your role as a board member?
4. Do you feel empowered to contribute during board meetings?
5. How do you think you could improve engagement on your Board?

# Sample Board Engagement Survey

## Sample Board Engagement Survey

Thank you for your time and commitment to our organization. This survey aims to understand how we can enhance board member engagement, improve governance practices, and ensure we're supporting you in fulfilling your role effectively. Your feedback is important and will remain confidential.

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being **Strongly Disagree** and 5 being **Strongly Agree**. There are also open-ended questions for additional insights.

### Section 1: Board Meetings & Participation

1. I find the board meetings well-organized and productive.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
2. The length and number of board meetings is appropriate.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
3. I feel encouraged to participate and share my opinions during meetings.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
4. I receive meeting materials with enough time to review them before meetings.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
5. The board meetings facilitate meaningful discussions and decision-making.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

### Section 2: Board Roles & Responsibilities

6. I have a clear understanding of my roles and responsibilities as a board member.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
7. I feel adequately prepared to contribute to the board's governance work.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
8. The board provides adequate oversight and support for the organization's leadership.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
9. I understand the organization's strategic goals and priorities.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
10. I feel that my expertise and skills are effectively utilized by the board.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

# Sample Board Engagement Survey

## Section 3: Engagement & Communication

11. I am satisfied with the communication between the board and the organization's leadership.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
12. I feel connected to the organization's mission and values.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
13. I feel empowered to contribute during board meetings.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
14. The organization's leadership effectively keeps the board informed of major developments.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

## Section 4: Board Structure & Development

15. I believe the board has the right mix of skills and expertise to govern effectively.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
16. I feel that the board's committees function efficiently and effectively.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
17. I have access to training or development opportunities relevant to my role as a board member.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
18. The organization provides sufficient support for board development and team building.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

## Section 5: Overall Satisfaction

19. I am satisfied with my overall experience as a board member.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
20. I feel that the board makes a positive impact on the success of the organization.
  - 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5



# Center for Nonprofit Leadership at Adelphi University

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What specifically would help to make you a more engaged board member?

Please list the three to five issues on which you believe the board should focus its attention in the next year. Be as specific as possible in identifying these points.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

In ten years, what do you believe is the single most important impact that this organization should have on the community it serves?

# **Onboarding Resources**

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# Nonprofit Board Resources

## BoardSource Resources for Nonprofit Boards

- <https://boardsource.org/fundamental-topics-of-nonprofit-board-service/>

## National Counsel of Nonprofits

- <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/board-orientation>

## 501 Commons Board & Governance Resources

- <https://www.501commons.org/resources/tools-and-best-practices/boards-governance>

## Adelphi University Tools for Executive Directors and Boards of Directors

- <https://www.adelphi.edu/nonprofit/resources/tools-for-executive-directors-and-boards-of-directors/>

# Health Care Board Resources

## Joint Commission Resources on Board Education

- <https://www.jcrinc.com/our-priorities/board-education/>

## Health Center Program Compliance Manual: Board Authority

- <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/compliance/compliance-manual/chapter19>

## NACHC Governance Guide for Health Center Boards

- <https://opus-nc-public.digitellcdn.com/uploads/nachc/redactor/a3c122bab7d52beea6298b931208862426663b85a18e9dc976ef1825d4a38caf.pdf>

## NACHC Orientation Template for Health Center Boards

- <https://www.nachc.org/resource/new-board-member-orientation-powerpoint-template-facilitator-guide-english-and-spanish/>

# Local Boards of Health Resources

**National Association of Local Boards of Health**

- <https://www.nalboh.org/page/GovernanceResources>

**National Association of County & City Health Officials**

- <https://www.naccho.org/resources>

**West Virginia Center for Local Health**

- <https://dhhr.wv.gov/localhealth/localpublichealth/Pages/Organization-and-Governance.aspx>

**West Virginia Code Chapter 16 Article 2**

- <https://code.wvlegislature.gov/16-2/>



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