

# Fully Equipped to Lead

A Florida system provides trustee orientation and annual evaluations to foster effective governance

By Kevin DiLallo

When trustees are appointed to the board of Manatee Memorial Hospital, they have a steep learning curve as they settle into this new role. Providing an orientation program and performing frequent performance evaluations help to ensure that trustees receive the training, resources and ongoing support they need to serve the organization.

Located in tight-knit Bradenton, Fla., just south of Tampa, Manatee Memorial is a 319-bed acute care facility. New additions to the 13-member board participate in a half-day orientation session in which they tour the hospital facilities and begin to review a packet of information that contains the hospital bylaws, annual goals and other helpful materials. The two most important things for the new trustees to understand are (1) their fiduciary responsibility to the hospital and (2) their duties concerning the medical staff, including approval of staff appointments, reappointments and clinical privileges, and oversight of medical staff policies and procedures. The orientation process also includes a review of the hospital's quality, safety and patient

satisfaction initiatives and goals for the coming year.

Trustees who don't have a health care background typically receive six months to a year of additional education about how the hospital functions. Emphasis is on the board's accountability to the community for the hospital's overall performance,

and its responsibility for executive oversight to ensure that performance goals are achieved.

New board members may feel overwhelmed by their role, so we encourage them to listen for the first three months of their service to become familiar with how the board functions. Many are also paired up with more veteran trustees to learn their roles. New trustees also are encouraged to reach out to our senior executives for answers to their questions and any additional information they may need. This sets the expectation that

trustee education is a two-way street and involves initiative on the part of both the organization and individual trustees.

As the chief executive, I encourage trustees to contact me if they need more background on an upcoming agenda item or they need additional information to understand a discussion that occurred at a recent meeting. I also contact newer members before a board meeting to explain granting physician privileges, disciplinary actions, or other complex policies and procedures.

Although trustees are appointed to serve one-year terms, many serve for several years if their annual reviews are positive and their competencies continue to match the board and the organization's needs. Based on the hospital's current goals, the nominating committee this year recommended replacing two long-time board members with two new trustees, an attorney and an educator. Both possess the competencies we believe will be beneficial as the hospital moves forward in a value-based health care delivery environment.

The transformation underway in health care requires new trustees to

We set the expectation that trustee education involves initiative on the part of both the organization and individual trustees.

participate in orientation, ongoing education and performance evaluation as part of the board role. At the same time, CEOs and board leaders should expect to spend more time supporting board members to ensure that they have the information and resources they need to succeed. **T**



American College of  
Healthcare Executives  
*for leaders who care®*

**Kevin DiLallo, FACHE** ([kevin.dilallo@uhsinc.com](mailto:kevin.dilallo@uhsinc.com)), is CEO of Manatee Healthcare System, Bradenton, Fla., and group vice president, UHS of Delaware Inc., King of Prussia, Pa.



Center Voices comes from the American Hospital Association's Center for Healthcare Governance.