

How well boards govern is influenced by a number of factors, among them, the knowledge and skills board members bring to their work. Ongoing board development, evaluation of board performance and meetings focused on constructive questioning and debate on strategic issues, while acknowledged as best practices that support effective governance, have been adopted variously by many, but not all boards. Board orientation, however, is widely considered to be a foundational requirement for effective governance.

Here are sample agenda topics you might consider for an initial orientation to one committee – the board Quality and Safety Committee. It's meant to be the first step in an ongoing learning process and could be conducted separately or in conjunction with an initial board orientation session.

Attendees: New Committee Member(s), Committee Chair, Staff to the Committee (for example, CNO, CMO and/or VP of Quality and Safety), mentor(s) for the new committee member(s), as appropriate.

- Review of hospital quality and safety commitment/philosophy and how the committee's work supports the hospital's mission
- Review of committee roster/composition
- Overview of health care quality and safety measurement systems and performance improvement processes
- Summary of key legislation, regulation and other mandates affecting health care quality and safety
- Review of external quality and safety benchmarking systems, such as those used by the Leapfrog Group or Health Grades
- Summary of the hospital's quality and safety improvement plan and goals
- Discussion of the committee charter and work plan
- Review of committee meeting calendar and meeting location
- Explanation of the metrics and performance reporting reviewed by the committee and how to analyze them
- Discussion of the last three to six committee meetings, with agendas and minutes provided
- Discussion of expectations for committee members (meeting preparation, attendance,

raising constructive questions about organizational performance, setting high performance standards, etc.)

- Review of staff and other resources available for questions and support
- Questions and discussion

A session like the one outlined above might last one to two hours. Prior to new members attending their first committee meeting, the committee chair and/or a staff member that supports the committee might call the new member to discuss or answer any questions about the committee meeting agenda and materials. Once a new committee member begins to attend meetings, the committee chair and a staff support person might spend a few minutes after the meeting to debrief it with the new member. Before-and-after meeting support can continue until the new member feels comfortable in the role.

For more on this resource, visit

<http://trustees.aha.org/boardstructure/committeeorientation.pdf>.

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