



How Early Childhood Education Directors Can Develop and Lead an Effective Board of Directors

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ICF Early Education Institute™

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Welcome - about Barb McCreedy

- Former Teacher
- Center Director
- Trainer and Curriculum Coach
- Executive Director Large Non-profit
- Board of Director Trainer, Coach and Mentor
- Author



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What we will cover today

- Common Operation Pitfalls
- Roles and Responsibilities
- A Team Approach
- Effective Communication
- Follow Through, Action Plans and Accountability



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Who is on the Call – Poll #1

Pick one to describe your current position:

- Community Based Program Administrator/Director
- Head Start/Federal Program Administrator/Director
- Board Member
- Teacher or Staff Member
- Other – type in your position



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Poll #2 - How well is your Board working?

Pick a song to describe your current Board operations:

- Zippity Do Da (fine tuned machine – lots of success)
- Some Where Over the Rainbow (up and down success – wish it were better)
- Take This Job and Shove it! (lots of effort not much success)



Poll #3 – Why is your Board not working?

What are your greatest frustrations and concerns?

Many may apply, but pick one of the following:

- No structure, systems or tools for the Board
- No communication or coordination
- No team work, trust and respect
- No activity or participation from the Board
- Micro-management from the Board
- No vision, goals or priority setting



Common Pitfalls for Boards

- Lack of trust, respect or mutual support
- Lack of working relationship with Board and administration
- Board or Director does not communicate fully with staff/parents
- Board of Directors does not understand their role
- Board of Directors does not understand ECE
- Board or Director withholds information
- Board or Director does not follow through (dead weight)
- Board micromanages
- Different goals and priorities
- Lack of systems and planning
- Power struggles



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Dysfunctional Modes of Board Operation

- **Fumbling:** Disorganization, lack of coordination, turnover, no orientation, unclear mission, lack of focus and direction
- **Auto-pilot:** Acceptance of status quo, lack of asking questions or discussion of decisions, going through the motions
- **The Submissive Board:** Yields to the control of others, families, Center Director, Agency
- **Micro-managing:** Control, role confusion, putting out fires, day to day focus and decision making, lack of team functioning, lack of trust and follow through



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Sharing Activity – Send in your responses

Submit a sentence or two for us to share!

- Why does it matter if the Board is operating successfully?
- What would be possible if the Board was operating successfully?



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The Good News and The Bad News

- The Program Director or Administrator has the opportunity to strategize, problem solve, and determine action steps in order to support, guide and ensure the program has a successfully operating Board of Directors
- The ability of your program to meet and achieve your program's mission and full potential on behalf of children and families depends on you.



The Administrators Role

- Model and demonstrate team work and set a positive working tone
- Model and demonstrate developing strong, trusting relationships
- Educate yourself on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of a Governing Board or Board of Directors
- Review and understand all guiding Board documents and be a resource and coach especially regarding ECE best practices
- Find “allies” one or two members or other Center Directors that want to learn how to build a better Board
- Find a coach or mentor to bring an objective point of view and solutions to the Board
- Celebrate small steps and signs of improvement



Understand Different Roles and Expectations

- Agency, Sponsor or Employer
- Board of Directors
- Provider or Vendor
- Center Director or Program Administrator
- Staff
- Parents



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The Three Major Duties of Board Members

- Duty of Obedience – mission, laws, by-laws, MOU, contract, requirements, license agreement
- Duty of Care – attend meetings, contribute skills and talents, do the work, ask questions, record-keeping, quality child care
- Duty of Loyalty – what is best for children? No hidden agenda, common goals and priorities



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Major Roles of Board of Directors

1. Determines mission, vision and purpose
2. Selects Director or Vendor for the program
3. Supports the Director and program
4. Evaluates the program and the Director annually
5. Ensures effective organizational planning both short and long term
6. Ensures and manages resources effectively



Roles - Board of Directors (cont.)

6. Ensures and manages resources effectively
7. Determines and monitors program and services to meet the mission
8. Enhances the organization's public image
9. Ensures legal and ethical integrity and serves as a court of appeal
10. Recruits and orients new Board Members and annually assesses its' own performance



Roles – Vendor/Provider and Center Director

- Operates day to day a high quality program
- Ensures state licensing and additional requirements (state or local)
- Hires and trains staff
- Establishes and monitors the curriculum
- Completes administrative and personal duties as required
- Markets program and maintains enrollment
- Completes fiscal duties and budget development
- Develops family communication systems and cooperative relationships



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Scenario #1

- The Board decides to add to the meeting agenda the program's closing time (a reoccurring issue and complaint). A Board member volunteers to complete research and the Board votes to stay open an additional 30 minutes. The Director felt "left out" of the discussion and is upset and is not taking action on the Board policy.
- Did the Board handle the situation correctly?
- Did the Center Director handle the situation correctly?



Build a Team Approach

- Post a bulletin board of members and invite to family activities – be visible
- Develop a welcome letter from the Board to families and staff
- Follow operating policies and procedures to ensure successful operations – establish meeting times at a consistent time
- Share accurate information and comprehensive management reports including financial updates – avoid surprises
- Ensure Board Members understand ECE operations, best practices and issues – invite a speaker
- Determine priorities and issues to be worked on
- Check in with Board members assigned tasks to support their efforts - lend your expertise



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Build Working Relationships

- Get to know individual Board Members
- Be proactive and reach out to Board members to ensure relationships
- Use “we” not “them” when referring to the Board
- Plan informal times before meetings or after to talk and discuss interests and connect with Board members
- Write newsletter and important letters signed by the Board President and Program Director
- Plan activities that present a “united front”



Build Effective Communication

- Clearly define lines of communication
 - Board communication to the Director
 - Director communication to the Board
 - Director and staff/family communication
 - Family and staff communication with Board
 - Board communication to families and staff
- Include lines of communication policies in Handbooks and post on bulletin boards



Scenario #2

- A Board member is approached by a parent in the parking lot. The parent is very upset by a conversation she had with the Program Director. The Board member listens and is very worried and agrees that the Director may not have taken the correct steps. The Board member sends an email to the Program Director about the conversation and asks her to correct the situation.
- Did the Board member handle the situation correctly?



Board/Director Clarity and Cooperation

- Board questions and concerns **MUST** go to Director, not to other Board members, staff or parents.
- Parent complaints must first go to the Director and then to Board in writing, not informally through a Board member or the grapevine.



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Board Action Plans and Evaluation

- Determine priorities and action items in conjunction with Center Director
- Determine short and long term goals – set priorities
- Assign a person responsible and a “by when deadline”
- Assign a person to be the Action or Strategic Plan Coordinator
- Ask for updates on a regular basis, address action items at each Board Meeting
- Provide support and revisions as needed to ensure success



Action Plans and Follow through

Objective/ Goal	Person Responsible	Action Item	By when
New Board Members	Beth (Board)	Circulate Job description	January 25
New Board Members	Beth (Board) Mark (Board)	Attend Parent Meeting "Meet and Greet"	February 1
New Board Members	Ann (Director)	Talk with identified parents	January 25
New Board Members	Mark (Board)	Post flyer at work office	January 25



Board Evaluation

- Annual evaluation of the Board Operations
- Evaluation of Board meeting effectiveness
- Evaluation of Board Members participation and contributions
- Informal feedback and discussion of the overall effectiveness of the Board from the Director, staff and families



Questions?

- Feel free to send in questions for discussion
- Questions can also be sent to me directly



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Reflection – Take a quiz!

- What did you learn about a Board of Directors today?
- What did you learn about the Program Director's role in working with a Board?
- How will you use the information from today?
- What will you do differently?



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Thank you!

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Publication: **Staying on Course: The Early Childhood Board's Guide to Success,**

<https://secure.ccie.com/catalog/product/staying-on-course-the-early-childhood-board-s-guide-to-success/4000528/>

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