



DEVELOPING A BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR YOUR FAMILY JUSTICE/MULTI-AGENCY CENTER

Special thanks to Allison Dearing, the Executive Director of One Place Metro Alabama Family Justice Center in Birmingham, Alabama for her assistance with this guide.

FOR ASSISTANCE WITH BOARD DEVELOPMENT IN A CENTER EMAIL US: INFO@ALLIANCEFORHOPE.COM

FOUR KEY STEPS TO DEVELOPING A BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1 SELECTING/RECRUITING

2 ONBOARDING/ORIENTING/TRAINING

3 ENGAGING AND MAINTAINING

4 BLESSING AND RELEASING

A Board of Directors is essential for any nonprofit organization or foundation. This includes Family Justice/Multi-Agency Centers that operate as 501c3s or have a non-profit foundation for fundraising. A dynamic and involved Board of Directors is a vital piece of a successful Family Justice/Multi-Agency (FJ/MA) Center. A Board of Directors can serve many purposes, such as fundraising,

acting as the face of the FJ/MA Center, supporting staff and executive leadership, and to advance a shared agenda and reach collective impact. They can use their community influence to advocate for change and promote the values of the Center and its systems-level work. Most commonly, Boards perform a fundraising and awareness raising role for local Centers.

"I HAVE FOUND THAT, WHILE THERE ARE A LOT OF BEST PRACTICES TO REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT, AND A LOT OF REALLY GOOD BOOKS, THERE IS SIMPLY NO SCIENTIFIC PROCESS FOR BOARD DEVELOPMENT. IT REALLY IS ABOUT TELLING THE STORY OF THE FJC; BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE WE MEET IN A VARIETY OF CAPACITIES; AND HELPING THEM FIND A FULFILLING WAY TO SERVE WITHIN THE FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER."

- FJC Director

STEP ONE: SELECTING/RECRUITING

- The FJ/MA Center must know and articulate its identity well to attract and recruit Board Members who can successfully serve the Center.
- The Board should be familiar with and reinforce the stated values of the FJ/MA Center.
- The biggest mistakes made by Centers is to fill their Board with the heads of the agencies working as partners in a Center. This creates an immediate conflict and makes fundraising with these Board members difficult for a Center.
- When recruiting, be up front and transparent about the role of the Board Member within your FJ/MA Center, and your expectations.
- Look for individuals to serve on the Board who demonstrate a general demeanor and philosophy of trying to find a way to make things work, and if it is a fundraising Board, you must recruit members who want to and enjoy raising money.
- Don't be afraid of offering someone their first Board service experience.
- Diversity on the Board provides different perspectives and strengths, which makes the FJ/MA Center stronger.
- Survivor perspective and representation on the Board is critical. However, not every survivor is comfortable sharing about their personal experience openly on the Board. Ideally, once a [VOICES](#) Chapter is created for a Center, the Chair of that VOICES committee should be on the Board of the Center.
- Elected officials are often excellent Board candidates as well since the Center is usually a public-private partnership and is focused on developing a public health and public safety collaborative. Public health and public safety are the two highest priorities of city and county governments. Before adding elected officials to a fundraising-focused FJ/MA Center Board, ensure that placing them on the Board does not create a conflict for their government body in order to be able to provide funding for your Center.

STEP TWO: ONBOARDING/ORIENTING/TRAINING

- For new Board Members, getting up to speed on FJ/MA Center operations can be a learning curve, especially given how unique FJ/MA Centers are versus traditional stand-alone nonprofits.
- During the onboarding process it is extremely important to provide new Board Members with relevant materials related to bylaws and FJ/MA Center policies, Center values, Board meeting schedules, individual roles/responsibilities, and term limit expectations, if any.
- Whereas a traditional nonprofit board must be focused on maintaining fiduciary duties of care, FJ/MA Center Boards are likely to be responsible for those duties *in addition to* developing a system view and helping to create and maintain a collaborative environment within a Center.
- Onboarding should always include training for the Board members on the fundamentals of FJ/MA Centers, the guiding principles of Centers, and context for understanding the role of the Center within the greater Family Justice Center movement.
- Training should always include expecting new Board members to tour a sampling of other FJ/MA Centers across the country and reading [Dream Big: A Simple, Complicated Way to Stop Family Violence](#) and [Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life](#).
- Board members benefit dramatically from attending the [Annual International Family Justice Center Conference](#), the Alliance's [National Leadership Summit](#) for FJ/MA Center leaders, and volunteering at a week of a [Camp HOPE America](#) program (if your Center is a CHA affiliate) or other opportunities to engage with adult and child survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

STEP THREE: ENGAGING AND MAINTAINING

- Building relationships with Board Members to determine their skills and passions helps them find a meaningful way to serve.
- A relationship of mutual trust between the Board and the Executive Director is something to strive for, and it takes time, attention, and a commitment to ongoing relationship-building to maintain that for the good of the FJ/MA Center.
- We always recommend that the Executive Director or CEO of a Center also serve on the Board rather than simply being a staff member, but this must be evaluated by each Center during the Board development process.
- Succession planning is an important role for the Board of Directors. This should be an ongoing, continuous process whereby the Board is creating conditions that will allow future leaders to be developed and succeed.
- The Board should be charged with evaluating the Executive Director on an annual basis to offer feedback and opportunities for growth. The Board should evaluate and assess themselves annually.
- Finding ways to express gratitude to Board Members both individually and collectively is key to maintaining their engagement over time. A regular thank you phone call or note is often so appreciated by Board members. The art of phone calls has been lost in the world of texting and email, but personal contact is always the best way to express appreciation.
- Social opportunities and special invitations to non-Center events are often a great way to connect with Board members without asking them for anything. Hosting them for a concert, dinner, or special event in your community can be a great way to express gratitude.

STEP FOUR: BLESSING AND RELEASING

- Just like staff, Board Members can also experience burnout over time. It is important to pay attention to patterns in behavior as they can reveal a Board Member's level of engagement.
- Board Members should be encouraged to check in on one another. It may be time for a Board Member to take a break from Board service.
- Remember: Board Members are volunteers. Always be grateful for their service.

RESOURCES

[A Chairman's Guide to Succession Planning](#)

[Backbone Board Members Have Additional Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Balanced Scorecard Institute, a Strategy Management Group Company](#)

[Board of Directors Toolkit for Nonprofit Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Organizations – Nonprofit Sustainability Technical Assistance \(NSTA\) Project](#)

[Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts](#)

[Dream Big: A Simple, Complicated Way to Stop Family Violence](#)

[Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't](#)

[Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life](#)

[Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards. Washington, DC: BoardSource, formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards](#)

[The Table Group – a Patrick Lencioni Company](#)