

Effective Board Leadership

A PREGNANCY RESOURCE MANUAL

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SECTION 2

Roles and Responsibilities

Topics:

- Nonprofit Boards
- Understanding Different Kinds of Pregnancy Center Boards
- Growing as a Pregnancy Center Board

Nonprofit Boards

Introduction

Nonprofit boards have a long tradition and history in our society. They are a major part of our American tradition of service to our local communities. As Christians and Care Net board members, we count it a privilege to serve God and our neighbors by participating as board members in the ministry of local pregnancy centers.

Board members often have questions about their roles and responsibilities. Just exactly what does a board member do? In a word, boards govern their organization. They provide:

- Vision
- Leadership
- Authority
- Direction
- Oversight
- Structure

Boards are given authority by law to govern and they are accountable to their staff, clients, donors, and the community for the way in which they fulfill their responsibilities. Care Net boards provide the long-term direction and vision for their center. In a sense, boards are entrusted with the task of taking their center on a journey. The board, through prayer and planning, determines the destination. It is their responsibility to provide a road map for their staff, volunteers, donors, and clients that will take the center to its destination and help it fulfill the dreams and goals of the future. Boards provide this road map as they execute their roles and responsibilities as board members. Boards are always asking three important questions:

- 1) Where are we going?
- 2) How do we get there?
- 3) How will we know when we have arrived?

Care Net board members work as a team with their director, even though their roles are very different. The board *governs* by developing policies, procedures, and long-range plans, and by providing authority and oversight for the ministry. The director *manages* by overseeing the daily tasks of administration and management of personnel, programs, projects and services.

The board develops broad policy statements and determines the long range direction of the ministry. The director decides the best way to implement those board directives. Both the board and the director form an essential team that guides and manages the ministry. A pregnancy center cannot be successful unless both the board and the director understand and fulfill their roles.

Care Net Board Roles and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of Care Net board members may be summarized as follows:

- **Spiritual Leadership**
 - 1) Adhere to the Care Net Standards of Affiliation, Statement of Faith, and Statement of Principle
 - 2) Implement biblical concepts of leadership and management
 - 3) Manifest the spiritual qualifications for leadership
 - 4) Encourage others in their spiritual growth
- **The Executive Director**
 - 1) Recruit and hire
 - 2) Evaluate
 - 3) Encourage
 - 4) Discipline and terminate
- **Planning for the Future**
 - 1) Adopt and implement a mission statement
 - 2) Adopt and implement a strategic plan for growth and development of the ministry
 - 3) Set policies and procedures
- **Oversight, Monitoring, and Evaluation**
 - 1) Financial oversight of the budget and financial practices
 - 2) Evaluation of the center programs
 - 3) Development and oversight of personnel policies
 - 4) Consistent review of the strategic plan

- Promoting the Pregnancy Center
 - 1) Wealth - help to raise funds and friends for the ministry
 - 2) Wisdom - bring specific gifts and skills to meet needs
 - 3) Work - devote time and energy as a board member and a board committee member
- Legal Responsibilities
 - 1) Comply with all federal and state regulations
 - 2) Understand the legal aspects of pregnancy center ministry
 - 3) Maintain accurate records of all board and center business

Understanding Different Kinds of Pregnancy Center Boards

It is helpful to understand that most nonprofit boards, including Care Net boards, follow a pattern of growth and development. Understanding where your board fits into this growth pattern will help your board members plan and implement board development.

The Organizing Board

Almost all pregnancy center boards begin as organizing boards. The organizing board is formed by a small group of people, a steering committee, who want to address the needs of women facing unplanned pregnancies in their community. The board is committed to this mission and to each other. Decisions are usually made without much conflict and the board is involved in the management and daily operations of the center. At this stage, the board often does not have a choice in whether they will be involved in management issues. The center is just getting started and the director is new. There is much to be done and the board does their share to get the center off to a good start.

A board member may perform a number of tasks, such as accounting and gift receipting. In the organizing board, board and director roles are often blurred. The organizing board tends to be casual about policies and procedures. Their plans may not be in written form. Personnel policies may be vague or nonexistent. There are few employees and the board may not perceive the need for a more organized approach to personnel and programs.

Even though this kind of board may serve the center well in the beginning, the board must grow beyond this stage. Sometimes a financial or staff crisis is needed to drive home the realization that it is



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No matter what kind of pregnancy center your board governs - large or small, urban or rural - your board needs to be a governing board.

time for the board to give up the “hands-on” operation of the center so they can govern and lead the center into the future.

The Governing Board

As the center grows in clients, services, and budget, the informal atmosphere that characterized the organizing board must change to become more structured. In this new board atmosphere, the management tasks previously performed by the board are assigned to the director and the staff. The board members concentrate on the direction, oversight, and long-range planning for the center.

In this stage of board development, the board will:

- 1) Make decisions about future staffing and programs for the center,
- 2) Decide who will do the major fundraising,
- 3) Be responsible for the oversight of finances, staff, and services.

The governing board will draw clearer lines between board and staff roles. For example, board members will not volunteer at the center. They will want to avoid potential conflicts that might arise by having a board member who is also an “employee” of the center. Their work as board members will take all the time and energy they have to devote to the center.

The organizing board may have raised most of the funds for the center through board committees. However, the needs of the center may now require an executive director whose job description focuses on fundraising and resource development for the center.

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The Institutional Board

Some centers may want to move beyond the governing model to an institutional board model. Many large, nonprofit organizations use this model. The institutional board is a large board, often with more than thirty members, whose membership is drawn from well-known, influential individuals within the community or beyond. The full board may meet semi-annually and their primary task is fundraising. The governing of the organization is left to an executive committee. The institutional board exists to promote and raise money for the organization.

A center which has a very large budget, a large staff, and a strong niche within the community may want to consider this type of board. The institutional model requires mature staff members, a gifted executive director, and board members with an unwavering commitment to fundraising.

Growing as a Pregnancy Center Board

It is helpful to understand that pregnancy center boards follow the growth patterns of other nonprofit boards. Most begin as small, informal boards with lots of energy commitment and then transition into more structured governing boards. A few boards will grow into the institutional board model.

No matter where your board fits into these three models for boards, it is important that your board continues to move toward a role that involves less and less management of details of center operations. Your board should focus on the roles and responsibilities of Care Net board members and allow the director and the staff to manage and implement plans and programs. Here are a few examples of how a board can grow and develop.

Example 1:

In the past your board may have assumed that all board members and staff knew the mission and goals of the pregnancy center and there was no need for a formal long-range planning process.

However, you have no way of knowing if your center is meeting its goals and you have no written goals for evaluating the performance of the director.

Now you are adding new board members and staff. You want to be sure everyone knows the goals for the coming year and what is expected of them.

It is time for the board to develop a written strategic plan for the center (see Section 6 - Strategic Planning).

Example 2:

In the past the board recruited new members primarily through word of mouth and the referrals of former board members. There was no formal board recruitment process.

But you now have two board members who almost never attend meetings and two others who do not follow through on assignments given to them. The director is threatening to resign

appoint a nominating committee that will initiate strategic board recruitment. New board members must clearly understand what is expected of them in terms of time and effort before they are confirmed.

The board also needs to review all roles and responsibilities of Care Net board members and develop written goals for themselves as board members. The board chairman should lead the way in helping the board members understand their responsibilities.

Example 3:

In the past one of the board members acted as volunteer coordinator for the center's twenty volunteers. But now the newly hired center director is instituting new volunteer procedures at the center. The volunteers are used to reporting to the board member. They take their questions and concerns about the new procedures to the board member for her advice. The director feels her leadership is being challenged and she wants to know what the board intends to do.

It is time for the board member to stop serving as volunteer coordinator and let the director supervise the volunteers. The board needs to develop an organizational flow chart that places the director at the head of all staff and volunteers. The board members should not manage staff or volunteers. Their job is to supervise the director they have hired.

Each of these examples involves the board making the transition from an informal board to a governing board that is beginning to fulfill its roles through governing rather than managing. This growth process is important for all pregnancy center boards. The more your board fulfills the responsibilities of board members, the more effective your center will be in ministering to the needs of women. No board is perfect and board development takes time. However, you should begin now to put a plan in place that will help your board confront its weaker areas. Care Net desires to give your board the tools you need to govern with excellence. The following sections of the Care Net Board Manual will help equip you with the basics of successful boardsmanship.

