

A New Year for Developing Your Board of Directors

All CASA programs depend on the support of a Board of Directors, whether as an independent not-for-profit or as a program within an administering agency. Programs sited in multi-program agencies also have Advisory Boards, providing additional guidance and support.

Many boards, however, struggle with getting and keeping a diverse and active membership, a theme shared by many CASA programs in their recent proposals for funding from the NYS Unified Court System. When it comes to board development, the old adage holds true: if you continue to do what you have always done, you will continue to get what you have always gotten. Below are a few common habits that, although there is a rationale for each, will help to perpetuate an ineffective board:

▷ Leaving board recruitment to the executive director or program director.

For: The director is out in the community, meeting people who are interested in the program's mission.

Against: Those individuals tend to be already associated with other child welfare-related agencies, which may mean a conflict of interest. If they are able to serve, and executive directors or board members of other agencies do sometimes make excellent board members for CASA, they may have serious time constraints or dual obligations regarding fund-raising.

Also, it is the board's job to oversee the executive director. If the majority of board members have been brought on by that director, you may inadvertently be building a voting block that is uncomfortable with that oversight role.

❧ Happy New Year ❧
and
Best Wishes for
2010

▷ Inviting friends of current board members.

For: Friends of current board members are known quantities. Generally board members don't recommend a friend unless they know this individual will be a strong contributor.

Against: Particularly if only one or two board members are bringing on friends, you can develop a clique on the board that obstructs discussions and fair voting practices. You also may not be adding to the diverse blend of skill sets, backgrounds, and cultures.

▷ Adding 'warm bodies' to your board.

For: The motivation for grabbing willing participants to place on your board is often born of an admirable sense of urgency to fill vacant positions or add skill sets.

Against: Sometimes this can mean getting

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Board Development (continued from page 1)

nothing *but* warm bodies, especially if anyone has twisted the candidate's arm by saying, 'Oh, you won't have to do much.' Ideally, boards take the time to thoroughly interview prospective candidates, check their references, and determine what they will be able to contribute to the management of your organization. A good introduction to each other can come from asking a community member to serve on an ad hoc or standing board committee as a non-board member. You then get a chance to get to know each other, and can make an informed choice when it comes to voting the individual on the board.

So, it's a new year, and a good chance to perhaps try some new strategies when it comes to your board. Reach out to various community organizations -- your local youth bureau, fraternal organizations, LGBTQ advocacy group, retirement communities, chambers of commerce, faith communities -- and ask if you can make a presentation about CASA. As part of that presentation, discuss how your Board of Directors or Advisory Board functions, what the committees do, and what you are looking for in new members.

Ideally, board development should be a year-long project. You should have a waiting list of prospects at all times if a vacancy occurs. Don't forget to plan for leadership succession as well. There should be trained leaders waiting in the wings to take over at the end of all of the officers' terms.

For training and resources, go to:

www.nycon.org

www.boardsource.org

www.on-board.org/resources.html

www.nonprofitexpert.com/board_development.htm

Cross-training on child welfare and substance abuse available online

The National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare and the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law have developed a customized tutorial to assist child welfare, legal and substance abuse professionals in understanding each others' fields. The free online training also provides tips on how to engage and retain families in substance abuse treatment. The trainings underscore the importance of partnership and collaboration among the three systems.

Go to: www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/training/default.aspx



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Webinar Offers Ways to Support Parents of Children with Disabilities

On February 3rd at 2:00 pm, the New York State Parenting Education Partnership and Prevent Child Abuse New York will host a webinar on ways to support parents of children with disabilities. Presenter will be Wendy Bender, LCSW, Healthy Families New York Training and Staff Development Specialist at PCANY.

The session will inform participants about the stages of grief a parent may pass through in dealing with their child's disability. It will offer strategies to help him or her to navigate the process of healing.

To register, go to:

<https://student.gototraining.com/18w5z/register/2236476515442807032>

RESOURCES

(Please note: Links to third party sites do not imply any affiliation between the UCS CASA Assistance Program and the site owner, or an endorsement, approval, or verification of any content.)

Overview of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

The Mayo Clinic website offers a comprehensive overview of fetal alcohol syndrome, including definitions, symptoms and treatment:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fetal-alcohol-syndrome/DS00184>

Concurrent Planning Resources

A number of publications in both English and Spanish relating to national practice on concurrent planning can be found on the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections site:

http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/concurrent-permanency-planning.html

Children's Bureau on Facebook

The Children's Bureau and Child Welfare Information Gateway are now on Facebook. Visit their pages to learn about the latest child welfare resources, news, and events.

The Children's Bureau:

www.facebook.com/thechildrensbureau

Information Gateway: www.facebook.com/childwelfare

Ice-breakers and Other Games

Looking for some new activities for volunteer training?

Go to: www.group-games.com/

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SAVE THE DATES

Regional Resource Development Seminars Slated

- **February 26, 2010 in White Plains**
- **March 23, 2010 in Albany**
- **April 30, 2010 in Rochester**

These regional trainings are designed to assist agency boards and staff in developing and implementing resource development plans. Trainers will be Dan Kos and Darlene Ward from the NYS UCS Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Court Improvement Programs.

Training will be held 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Registration information coming soon.



NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM • DIVISION OF COURT OPERATIONS
CASA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

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"We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude."

~ Charles R. Swindoll