COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

SUCCESSION PLANNING MANUAL

In order for the Community Health Center to remain healthy organizationally, its leadership should be engaged in Succession Planning. Succession Planning should be part of the Community Health Center’s strategic planning process. Succession planning is not just filling the CEO’s position when it becomes vacant. It should cover all levels of management and clinical positions, as well as Board member vacancies.

ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSION PLAN

1. Develop a strategic plan
2. Establish or modify criteria and job descriptions for various leadership positions, which may change as the organization’s goals evolve.
3. Conduct an internal review and assess the current leadership.
4. Plan what to do if there is a sudden vacancy.
5. Conduct an external review of candidates.
6. Develop a selection process.
7. Create access to and opportunities for training in leadership skills.
8. Institutionalize the plan.

1. Develop a Strategic Plan: The Board and senior executives should establish the vision for one year and 3-5 years into the future. The vision will drive an examination of what type of individuals need to guide the health center in the future. Typically answer several key questions:
   - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Center
   - What will primary health care look like 1, 3, 5, and 10 years from now?
   - What is the role of managed care, quality initiatives, or government funding?
   - What resources are available to the community?
   - Are the demographics, age, income levels, and health care needs of the community changing? How will those changes impact the services that are needed?
   - Is the Health Center in a position to continue to meet the health care needs of the community or address the changes? What does the Health Center need to do in the coming years to fill those gaps and meet those challenges?
   - What kind of leaders in what positions will it take to get the health center from where it is not to where it wants to be in the future? An innovator? A consolidator? A turn-around master? Other key leadership qualities>

2. Establish Criteria and Job Descriptions for Various Positions
   - The Board should examine what key leadership skills or core competencies are needed to achieve the objectives.
• The Executive Committee (with input from the CEO if possible) should modify the CEO’s job description, in necessary, for review and approval by the Board.
• For other key management positions, including clinical, the CEO (with input from the rest of the executive team) should establish the criteria for any new job description as needed and revise the current job descriptions as necessary.
• The job descriptions should be objective, not tailored to a particular person.
• CEO position - Break down leadership qualities into elements that will be critical to job performance, such as: the ability to create and sustain a vision; team building; solving complex problems; possessing a steady and calm temperament; and being able to communicate effectively.
• Relate the job description to organizational goals. For example: If financial viability is a key factor, the Health Center might look for a CEO who has the ability to take difficult positions in the face of opposition; while instilling loyalty in the team and motivating people to think creatively about the future.

3. Conduct an Internal Review and Assess the Current Leadership
• Start by making sure that its Board composition meets Section 330 requirements
• The evaluation of the CEO and senior management job descriptions should flow from the question of what future leadership skills are needed to achieve strategic plan objectives. The Board and CEO should evaluate the CEO’s strengths and weaknesses in connection with or similar to the annual performance evaluation process, so that the CEO’s qualities can be a yardstick for the qualities sought in the next CEO.
• To determine what the leaderships needs are today and tomorrow (versus yesterday), the Health Center’s leaders need to engage in a formal process. List the strengths and weaknesses of the existing leadership along with the core competencies required of the future leaders. Analyze whether the current members of the team possess those core competencies or whether they can get to that point through training, education, and mentoring. Include annual performance measures as an addendum to the job descriptions for all members of the management team.
• Since one of the Health Center’s key resources is its human capital, senior management team members and other staff members, including clinical employees, should be evaluated in terms of their potential to become the CEO or another member of senior staff. Such planning examines how to match or develop skill sets in existing personnel to meet future needs, instills loyalty in employees along with the personal growth that comes from mentoring, and charting paths for all managers.
• Ideally a Health Center should have a database that provides usable information, such as the number of people who will retire in the next 5 years. Information from that database guides the succession planning.
• An external consultant or facilitator might by used to manage the internal review of your current workforce and the matching of talent to strategic goals. They could help a senior staff conduct assessments, keep Board and senior management focused on the goal of identifying future managers, and provide advice on performance measure for
various positions, develop a recruitment protocol for the Board to use in CEO recruitment.

4. Determine Whether an Interim Leader is Necessary (Plan What To Do in a Sudden Vacancy):
   It is more than likely that the Health Center will need to fill a position before the succession plan has been fully implemented due to the departure of a manager for another job or because of illness, or, worse, a sudden death. The main advantage of assigning an interim leader is that it promotes continuity in governance and/or operations and lessens the panic that might accompany a sudden departure. However, the person may not have the full skill set to step in, in which case parts of the job could be assigned to other members of the senior staff. The Interim Leader should be given a written agreement that lists key expectations regarding job performance and what the future hold. Decide whether to allow or even encourage the interim person to apply for the permanent position. Alternately, the interim or transitional person could be designated to assist in finding the successor.

5. Conduct an External Review of Candidates
   • Succession planning does not necessarily mean that the Health Center will select only from internal candidates. Under certain circumstances, Centers may have to look outside the Health Center to find the appropriate candidate. If external candidates are sought, decide how to find them - through a recruitment agency, through professional journals, through the newspaper, or pre-screen potential candidates who are already known.
   • Develop a Selection Process