

Board Members Behaving Badly Workshop
September 25, 2009

Brainstorming Notes

“Board Members Behaving Badly” is a mystery not a puzzle.* Unlike a puzzle, there is no right answer or answers. The components of mystery are: Personalities, Structures, Communication and Conflict.

Question: Given this framework for BMBB, what can you do to address each component?

1. Personality:

- Understand types of personalities
- Include personality types work in a board retreat
- Kill them with kindness!

2. Structure:

- Board training
- Clarify roles
- Give board members information on roles for each staff person
- Clarify chain of command
- Training on Robert’s Rules of Order
- Training on statutes and sunshine laws related to LPHA’s
- Review (& update) bylaws
- Review (& update) policy manuals
- Let board members read contracts
- Training on principals of public health
- Have a strong board president
- Try to give board a balance of information – not too much & not too little
- Have a clear mission statement
- Set goals and review them regularly
- Have staff present on their programs to the board
- Engage board in strategic planning & community assessments

3. Communication:

- Prepare briefs for board to read prior to meetings

- Briefs could be issue related and/or process oriented (example: all about the disease of H1N1 and/or about how the vaccine clinics will be organized)
- Provide board members a list of acronyms and what they stand for
- Discuss meeting communication
- Have board members participate via video conferencing with MALBOH
- Have meeting ground rules or guidelines

4. Conflict:

- Be sure to look from both sides of the conflict
- Have policies & procedures for conflict
- Seek and outside opinion
- Have a strong Board President
- Administrator be knowledgeable about statutes, local ordinances, lay of the land in the community, the political will of the community.
- Have conflict of interest policies in place

***Risks and Riddles**

“There’s a reason millions of people try to solve crossword puzzles each day. Amid the well-ordered combat between a puzzler’s mind and the blank boxes waiting to be filled, there is satisfaction along with frustration. Even when you can’t find the right answer, you know it exists. Puzzles can be solved; they have answers.

“But a mystery offers no such comfort. It poses a question that has no definitive answer because the answer is contingent; it depends on a future interaction of many factors, known and unknown. A mystery cannot be answered; it can only be framed, by identifying the critical factors and applying some sense of how they have interacted in the past and might interact in the future. A mystery is an attempt to define ambiguities.”

By Gregory F. Treverton, Director of RAND’s Center for Global Risk and Security.
Smithsonian magazine, June 2007

Solving puzzles or framing mysteries

“Puzzles may be more satisfying, but the world increasingly offers us mysteries. Treating them as puzzles is like trying to solve the unsolvable—an impossible challenge. But approaching them as mysteries may make us more comfortable with the uncertainties of our age.”

Jim McGee, Managing Director at New Shoreham Consulting

McGee Musings, 2007 <http://www.mcgeemusings.net/>

