

Upstate New York Veteran Research Engagement Board Bylaws

Mission Statement

The overarching mission of the Upstate New York Veteran Research Engagement Board (hereafter referred to as “Board”) is to promote innovative, Veteran-centered research informed by stakeholder involvement that anticipates and addresses the needs of all Veterans.

Purpose

The Board will provide guidance and feedback to the Centers (Center of Excellence for Suicide Prevention; Center for Integrated Healthcare). The Board’s involvement will span the research process from topic generation to dissemination and implementation of results, and has two primary goals:

- a) Goal 1. Design research protocols that are tailored to VA health care consumers and the broader Veteran community.
- b) Goal 2. Increase Veteran engagement in the research continuum through training of Veteran Board members in the goals of research, gaining Veteran feedback during research development, and creating a continuous feedback loop with Veterans throughout research studies.

Directors and Board Members

Directors

Liaisons. Liaisons are COE-CIH staff members that will support ongoing development of the Board by managing the logistics of Board operations. Liaison responsibilities include, but are not limited to: contacting members to remind them about upcoming meetings, scheduling presentations and collecting required documents from presenters; creating agendas; disseminating materials to Board; and taking meeting minutes. Liaisons will assist with rolling recruitment and new member education. Liaisons will also facilitate monthly meetings with the Board Chair.

COE-CIH Leadership. As needed, COE-CIH Executive Directors, or their designees, will provide consultation to the Board upon request.

Board Members

Member, appointment, composition and eligibility. Board members shall be appointed by the Directors. In appointing members to the Board, the Directors shall act in good faith and shall use their best efforts to achieve a composite Board that reasonably reflects the diverse needs and interests of the communities serviced by VA. The Directors will consider membership in part based on the following: age, gender, race/ethnicity/culture, geographic location (rural/urban), and military history (including service era and combat exposure). Individuals interested in joining the Board will submit an application and be interviewed and selected by the Directors. Selections will be based on 1) match with preferred board member characteristics, and 2) needs identified by the Board.



Desired board member characteristics:

- Excellent communication and listening skills
- Ability to see beyond one's own personal experiences
- Ability to use own personal experiences in a constructive manner
- Ability to be non-judgmental
- Ability to maintain a positive attitude
- Ability to engage with a diverse population of Veterans and researchers
- Ability to advocate for other Veterans and family members
- Ability and willingness to expand knowledge and skills
- Willingness to participate in bringing about meaningful change in VA research activities
- Ability to respect the limitations of the research environment in meeting individual needs
- Respect for the opinions of others, even when they conflict with one's own views by maintaining open-mindedness

Eligible individuals will be US military Veterans and Veteran's caregivers, who are US citizens. We will attempt to have 2 Veteran caregivers involved in the board at all times.

No individual member of the public or representative of any particular organization, community, or group shall have any enforceable right to membership on the Board.

Term. Subject to the provisions relating to resignation and removal of a member, membership terms will last one year in staggered terms with new membership accepted in a rolling fashion. After a year a board member may commit to additional years of service annually.

Member Resignation. Any member may resign at any time from the Board upon written notice to the Directors.

Member Removal. Members may be voluntarily or administratively removed from the Board if the Board member:

- Demonstrates behavior outside of good character
- Does not manage Engagement Board business as directed
- Fails to maintain strict confidentiality regarding meeting content by communicating about research or other projects outside of meetings
- Acts as sole representative of the Board without explicit approval of the Board
- Fails to meet attendance requirements as follows:
 - Each member shall attend at least 9 meetings annually to be in good standing.
 - Missing three or more meetings without notice, extenuating circumstances or communication to the Directors will result in removal.

Removal of members will be conducted in the following manner:

Only the Directors have the power to remove a Board member. The Directors may remove any member of the Board from office (for causes listed above) at any time during his or her term upon written notice to such member. The notice shall be effective when given in person, by telephone, or upon deposit in the US mail. Members will be strongly encouraged to attempt to resolve any issues 1-on-1 prior to involving the directors.

Vacancies. Vacancies are filled to maintain Board membership at 10 members. All members of the board will seek out interested applicants to replace or grow the board as necessary. The

Liaisons will assist current members in selection of future members. Centers will also actively recruit members to fill vacancies.

Compensation. Members will be compensated up to \$599.99 annually. Compensation is provided per full meeting attended (\$49.99 per meeting attended) and disbursed monthly.

Rights and Duties. Board members shall provide individual opinions/perspectives with respect to the research or other programming of the COE-CIH. Specifically, Board members will:

- Receive Without Compensation (WOC) Status appointments at the Canandaigua VAMC.
- Attend all Board meetings unless there is an emergency. If unable to attend, member will notify the Liaisons as soon as reasonably possible.
- Review materials distributed by liaisons prior to each meeting
- Listen and pay attention to what others have to say
- Encourage others, particularly quieter members, to offer their ideas and give them space to do so
- Avoid competing or arguing
- Communicate with liaisons in a timely manner if issues arise
- Complete feedback form after each session
- Keep Board materials and discussions confidential
- Promote the Board's mission and vision, priorities, programs and services
- Be respectful of all members
- Avoid foul language and vulgarity in word choice
- Abide by all Rules and Regulation presented and governed by the COE and CIH, VHA, and HIPAA

Limitations on powers. The role of the Board members shall be solely consultative in nature. In no event shall the Board have any authority to exercise any control over the daily management or operation of the COE-CIH, nor shall the Board or any member thereof have the right to require or to seek a court or governmental agency to order, COE-CIH or its Directors, officers, or employees to take or to refrain from taking any action with respect to programming, services, or policies. No member of the Board shall be deemed to have the rights of the Directors.

Committees. With the consent of the Directors, the Board may appoint one or more temporary committees.

Board Chair (Veteran Member).

The Board Chair will express interest and be selected by majority nomination of Board members. The key function of the Board Chair is to lead and moderate meetings with the Liaisons serving as facilitators. The term of Board Chair will be one year with potential to be re-elected by Board members during an open election.

Meetings

Location and frequency

Board meetings will last approximately two hours and occur monthly at the Veterans Outreach Center in Rochester, NY or as otherwise specified. Time and frequency may vary depending on the level of demand for Board feedback. Electronic communication outside of the meetings may



be required when necessary. Reasonable accommodations will be made for those without computer or Internet access.

Meeting Topics

The agenda for each meeting with particular attention to studies or projects presented during the meeting will be decided upon by the COE/CIH leadership or designee(s).

Meeting Process

The meeting will always include several standard portions:

- 1) Welcome (to include ice breakers as appropriate) and announcements
- 2) Review of last meeting's minutes
- 3) Review of this meeting's objectives, rules, and agenda
- 4) Current project discussion
- 5) Meeting debrief, feedback, questions

Quorum

At any meeting of the Board, a majority of members then serving shall constitute a quorum.

Conduct in meetings:

Both Directors and Board members are expected to abide by the following rules of conduct during meetings:

- Start and end meetings on time
- Keep phones off or on silent
- Allow everyone to participate equally
- Help each other learn
- Respect members' right to "pass"
- Do not interrupt the speaker
- Do not have side conversations unless necessary for the comfort or safety of members
- Do not share information regarding research or other projects to non-Board members outside of meetings.

Amendment of Bylaws

This document will be amended, or repealed, and new Bylaws adopted by the Board as the Board adapts to its veteran engagement functions. Recommendations for amendments in the Bylaws may be initiated by the Board or Directors. The Directors and COE/CIH leadership must approve any proposed changes.

I, _____ hereby attest that I understand the Bylaws and agree to these terms.
Name

Signature

Date

