

Driving Equitable Access to Quality Care

Tips for Healthcare Boards



Healthcare Trustees
of New York State

Ensuring equitable access to quality care is part of the fiduciary responsibility of hospital and health system boards to serve their communities.

This means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy, regardless of their background or circumstances (CDC definition).



This core governance responsibility is tied to quality, compliance, community trust and financial performance.

How can trustees ensure their organization provides equitable care to all patients and community members?

Request and review data to better understand your community, patient population and existing disparities, and assess progress.

Data should:

- be stratified by several factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender);
- reflect the social determinants of health (e.g., income, insurance status, etc.);
- identify trends and gaps; and
- be pulled from internal and external sources.

Examples include:

- electronic medical records;
- patient safety reports;
- patient satisfaction reports;
- Community Health Needs Assessments;
- [County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#);
- [U.S. Census Bureau: State and County profiles](#); and
- [Prevention Agenda dashboard](#).

Evaluate progress toward goals with metrics established in advance — performance data should be reported to the board or designated committee(s) at defined intervals, such as quarterly.

Key points:

- Data serve as the foundation for informed decision-making, so it is important that data are comprehensive and accurate.
- Although it is up to senior management and clinical leaders to execute the strategy, the board ensures accountability and alignment with organizational goals and is responsible for making sure plans are followed.
- To ensure accountability, consider assigning a dedicated board committee or use an existing committee, such as quality or governance. Regular reports to the full board are imperative.

Ensure your organization's strategic plan contains goals related to equitable access to care.

- This will elevate the goals across the organization and unify commitment.

- Include metrics that set a framework and specify key resources that must be designated for achieving these goals.

Be aware of related regulations and requirements that affect the board's actions and what the board oversees.

- Boards must stay updated on regulations and standards that impact accreditation and reimbursement.

Engage in regular dialogue at the board level. Encourage boardroom discussions around questions such as:

- Does our board understand that equitable access is tied to quality, compliance, community trust and financial performance?
- What data are we currently receiving at the board level and how often? Are board members asking for data or just reviewing what is presented to them? Are we asking questions about the data?
- What are the demographics and primary health challenges of the population our hospital serves?
- What health disparities exist and what steps can our organization take to address them?

- Is health equity integrated into our quality program? Do we look at our quality metrics by demographic groups across the various services lines?
- What are our facility access rates for different patient demographic groups? How do they compare to general community demographics?
- How do our patient satisfaction scores look when stratified?
- How are we assessing progress?
- Do our mission, values and strategic priorities reflect the goal of driving equitable access to care?
- What organizations can we collaborate with to improve access?
- Are we meeting the regulations and standards of regulatory and accreditation agencies?
- Is our board planning for our community's current and future needs?
- How are the demographics of the communities we serve reflected in our board's composition?



HOW DOES YOUR BOARD MEASURE UP?

How many of the above are you doing to fulfill this core governance responsibility?

These questions are meant to stimulate thinking and discussion on how your hospital or health system is driving equitable access to care at the board level. Each hospital and health system is different and your answers will be affected by the specific structure and characteristics of your organization and board(s).

Information for this resource was obtained from *AHA Trustee Services publications:**

[Quality Oversight, Health Equity and the Community Board's Role](#)
[Health Equity Crosses All Board Responsibilities](#)

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[The Board's Role in Advancing Healthier, More Equitable Communities](#)
[It Starts at the Top: How Boards Can Prioritize Health Equity**](#)

**Log-in required

Other resources you may be interested in:

[HTNYS' Community Health Initiatives Tool](#): Highlights hospital and health system community health initiatives across the state, organized by the *NYS Prevention Agenda* priorities.

HTNYS Boardroom Essentials Video: [What trustees need to know about health equity](#)

[HTNYS Health Equity and Community Health Resource Library](#)

[HTNYS' Member Spotlight](#): Highlights members' programs on research and innovation, community health and wellness, quality and operational excellence, and access to care.

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