



TOOL KIT #1

BOARD STRUCTURE

FAQ - ORIENTATION

1. When does orientation occur?

Orientation begins right after someone agrees to join the Board. Formal orientation should be provided before the next scheduled Board meeting to enable the new member to come prepared, and a Board binder or access to an online Board document repository should be provided right away. The new Board member should receive a warm welcome (lunch or coffee, a phone call) from an established Board member and the Board Chair, as well as the Executive Director.

2. What are special considerations for Parent Center Board orientation?

The IDEA requires that PTIs and CPRCs must be a parent organization that has a Board of directors, the majority of which must consist of parents of children with disabilities from birth to age 26. The Board must also include individuals with disabilities and individuals working in the fields of special education, related services, and/or early intervention. The parent and professional members of the Board must be broadly representative of the population to be served, including low-income parents and parents of English learners.

For Parent Centers, Board orientation is rarely a one-size fits-all affair.

Some Board members may have limited familiarity or experience with important aspects of Board service such as understanding financial statements, legal requirements, or the difference between governance and management. The purpose of orientation is NOT to make Board members technical experts on these issues, but rather to provide them with basic tools and information to enable them to perform their role effectively.

Have an honest conversation with prospective and new Board members about what they are comfortable – and uncomfortable – with, and design the formal orientation to help address these gaps, and the informal support system to assure that new Board members are able to ask for help in their learning process. By handling the orientation process with sensitivity, tact, and cultural competence, you will go a long way toward building the Board culture you want.

3. My organization has limited time and resources – and my prospective Board members have many demands on their time and attention. How can I assure that my Board members have the orientation they deserve and we need?

- Use EXISTING resources like BoardSource and the [Serving on Groups](#) training to enable people to read or watch videos on their own time and schedule. There's so many resources out there!
- Use your current Board members as resources for what they do best. If you have a Board member with expertise in financial management, make a connection for a 1:1 meeting at a mutually convenient time.
- Attach an orientation session to a Board meeting or other scheduled event.



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