



Minimum Standards for Acceptance of Voluntary Health Agency Members

Membership in the National Health Council by voluntary health agencies (VHAs) is contingent upon their meeting the Council's Standards of Excellence. These 38 standards were adopted by the NHC Board of Directors to ensure that VHA members maintain the highest levels of efficiency, accountability, transparency, and public stewardship. The standards cover the areas of governance, human resources, programs, fundraising, finance, accounting and reporting, and evaluation.

Prospective VHA members may be admitted to the National Health Council without meeting all of the Standards of Excellence, upon an affirmative vote by the Membership Committee and board of directors, provided that they make a commitment to achieve full compliance with the standards within one year of acceptance into membership.

However, in evaluating prospective VHA members, the National Health Council requires that the following minimum standards be met:

Standard 1: The organization's governance documents state that: a) its primary purpose is health-related and national in scope; b) there is a procedure for governing the organization; c) the organization conforms with applicable state and federal law regarding the filing of governance documents; d) the organization has been in operation for no less than three years; and e) relationships with any affiliated organizations using the same name and logo are codified in a written agreement.

Standard 3: The board has a minimum of eight members.

Standard 4: The organization's bylaws specify term limits for board members.

Standard 9: Board members may not receive compensation for their board service other than reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred to fulfill their board duties. Board members may be directly or indirectly compensated by the organization for other services, subject to review and approval by the governing board and provided that a substantial majority of the board remains independent.

Standard 18: The organization employs a chief staff executive directly or through outsourced management.

Standard 19: The organization is engaged in any one or more of the following programs: research, professional education, public education and health promotion, health services, community services, advocacy, or social action.

Standard 20: The organization spends at least 65 percent of annual expenses for program services.

Standard 24: The organization demonstrates a broad base of public support in its funding sources by: 1) maintaining its section 501(c)(3) public charity status in accordance with the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code and Treasury regulations and 2) developing a board-approved gift acceptance policy that must cover: a) a requirement for mission-related benefit, independence and control, consistency, and balance (consistent with Standard 32); b) types of acceptable donations (e.g., property, stock); c) types of acceptable donors (e.g., individual, foundation); d) criteria for refusal; and e) process and operating procedures for evaluating gifts.*

Standard 26: The organization does not enter into agreements with organizations or individuals to raise funds on a commission or percentage basis.

Standard 34: The organization ordinarily spends no more than 35 percent of its public support income on fundraising.

Standard 36: The organization has an audit of national office operations performed annually by an independent certified public accountant.