

Example Board By-Laws

Bylaws are the ruling documents of a board or council. Because bylaws are more or less set in stone, it is in the interest of the board to keep them as brief as possible. Bylaws should set forth the basic structure and qualities of the board (Kennen, 2007).

This material contains the names of possible by-law sections, with possible language related to family and youth involvement. The purpose of this document is merely to give you an idea how to incorporate family and youth involvement into multiple sections of your by-laws, helping to sustain involvement even when leadership turns over. When establishing by-laws for your board, it is a good idea to have an attorney review them to make sure the language is appropriate and that nothing critical is missing.

1. Board Name

2. Objectives and Purposes

3. Membership and Privileges

Possible family and youth involvement language:

- ◆ Membership composition:
 - _____ % of members shall be family or consumers. Or, no more than _____ % of members shall be state employees or providers of mental health services.
 - _____ % of members shall be youth. Every attempt shall be made to have a balance between the number of youth members and non-youth members.
 - Membership may reflect the need for more than one representative from each constituency or perspective to prevent isolation and tokenism.
- ◆ Examples of eligibility criteria:
 - Members shall have personal involvement with _____ agency or previous experience with _____ issue or agency.
 - Membership is open to all interested organizations and individuals in the state of Colorado who support the mission and goals of the board.
- ◆ One term of a board member shall be _____ years, and members may serve for no more than a total for _____ consecutive or _____ total terms.
 - Note: Years or term may direct there be an alternate year rotation for family / youth / consumer representatives to facilitate mentoring and ensure continuity of input from such members.
- ◆ Example from the Colorado System of Care Collaborative By-Laws.
 - The Collaborative is dedicated to ensuring proportional representation from family members and consumers as Active Members and on the Steering Committee. Family members are defined as (1) a caregiver who is raising or has raised a child with social, emotional, behavioral, physical or mental health needs, (2) a person who has had a sibling or parent with social, behavioral, physical or mental health needs or (3) someone who themselves has social, behavioral, physical or mental health needs.
- ◆ Example from the By-Laws of the Colorado Youth in Government State Board (www.coloradoyig.org/BOARD/Colorado_YIG_State_Board_Bylaws.pdf).
 - Number and Term of Office: The State Board shall consist of a maximum of twenty-one members, two positions on the State Board shall be reserved for

program participants who are elected by their peers at the Colorado Youth in Government Model Assembly and who have at least one year of previous program experience.

4. Anti-Discrimination Statement

Possible family and youth involvement language:

- ◆ Example from the Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council:
 - The Council shall not discriminate in any regard with respect to race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, parenthood, custody of a minor child, or physical or mental disability.

5. Officers

Possible family and youth involvement language:

- ◆ The Chair shall preside at all Board meetings, appoint committee members, assign and oversee mentors to new board members, and perform other duties of the office.

6. Committees

Possible family and youth involvement language:

- ◆ Committee membership will contain the necessary perspectives for the issue before the committee, inclusive of family, youth, and consumer perspectives.
- ◆ Meetings should make every attempt to accommodate the needs of those with the necessary perspectives.
- ◆ Committee Composition:
 - _____ % of members shall be family or consumers. Or, no more than _____ % of members shall be state employees or providers of mental health services.
 - _____ % of members shall be youth. Every attempt shall be made to have a balance between the number of youth members and non-youth members.
 - Membership may reflect the need for more than one representative from each constituency or perspective to prevent isolation and tokenism.

7. Meetings

Possible family and youth involvement language:

- ◆ Regular meetings will be held on _____ date at _____ time, and be held at _____ location.
 - Note: Consider setting the regular meeting time at a time that is suitable for family and youth members.

8. Participation in Meetings

9. Minutes and Records

10. Voting

Possible family and youth involvement language:

- ◆ For purposes of a vote, a quorum will be defined as a majority of board members. In the absence of a quorum, no formal action will be taken except to postpone the vote to a subsequent meeting.
 - Note: You may also define a quorum as a requiring at least one or more members representing a particular perspective, such as the family / youth / consumer perspective.

11. Amendments

12. Conflict of Interest

Possible language:

- ◆ Any member of the board who has a financial, personal, or official interest in, or conflict (or appearance of a conflict) with any matter pending before the Board, including a personal relationship with potential new board members or funders, of such nature that it prevents or may prevent that member from acting on the matter in an impartial manner, will offer to voluntarily excuse him or herself, will vacate his seat, and will refrain from discussion and voting on the matter.

13. Confidentiality

Possible family and youth involvement language:

- ◆ All board members, including family, youth, or consumer members, will sign the same privacy or confidentiality statement when joining the board.

14. Fiscal Policies

15. General Provisions

Adapted from the bylaws of the Mental health Planning and Advisory Council, the bylaws of the Colorado Youth in Government State Board, the bylaws of the Colorado System of Care Collaborative, and from the bylaws of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Council.