



***KHA'S Trustee Resource***  
***November 2021***

**Building a Strong Workforce: The Board's Role in Employee Satisfaction and Engagement**

The importance of workplace engagement and satisfaction has always been a critical element of success in hospitals and health systems. While essential to everyday care, the passion and commitment that emerges from engaged employees is further highlighted during times of crisis. After more than a year of hospitals and health systems across the country developing crisis management strategies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Hospital Association summarized key lessons learned for boards. One of the primary takeaways was that boards learned they need to be attentive to how employees are coping during times of crisis. Whether in the midst of a crisis or not, boards must understand the challenges staff are facing and prioritize workforce needs—from frontline staff to c-suite leaders.

**What Is Employee Engagement?**

Employee engagement is a feeling of commitment and enthusiasm for one's work leading to a willingness to go above and beyond the minimum required effort. Research shows engagement happens when employees feel:

1. **An active commitment** or a plan to stay and recommend the organization to others.
2. **Personal significance**, where employees feel valued and are enthusiastic about their work.
3. **Confidence in the future** or a belief in the future of the organization.

While most organizations recognize the value of employee engagement, it is important to recognize that not all engagement is created equal. To be impactful on the mission, employee engagement must be aligned with the organization's strategic goals.

**The Benefits of Engaged Employees**

Employee engagement and workplace satisfaction are critical to the success of any organization, but the connection between satisfaction and success is stronger in the health care industry.

**Quality and Safety.** A study from the Advisory Board found that every one percent increase in hospital employee engagement correlated with a 0.33-point increase in the facility's overall hospital rating in their Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems, known as HCAHPS. The study also reported a one percent increase in hospital employee engagement was tied to a 0.41-point increase in patient safety grades. Another key finding from the Advisory Board study was hospitals should not compare themselves with other industries when analyzing employee engagement. That's because health care employees are already more than twice as engaged as employees in other industries. Given the strong connection between employee engagement and outcomes, organizations should focus on health care-specific benchmarks and measurements when tracking employee engagement and satisfaction.

**Interconnectedness of Factors Influencing Organizational Success.** Research has proven safety, quality, the patient experience, and caregiver engagement are all connected. In addition, all four of these factors impact a hospital or health system's financial performance. Because all of these factors are interconnected, high performance in any one area can positively impact another area. For example, one study reported that organizations in the top quartile for physician and employee engagement have lower rates for most hospital-acquired infections than those in the bottom quartiles, as well as shorter lengths of stay, fewer readmissions, better hospital-acquired condition scores, and lower Patient Safety and Adverse Events Composite scores. The same analysis also found a positive connection between financial performance and workforce engagement.

### **Conducting Employee Satisfaction and Engagement Surveys**

An employee satisfaction and engagement survey measures commitment and enthusiasm for the work being done, as well as key drivers of engagement. The act of surveying employees sends a strong message that the board and senior leadership values employee opinions. At the same time, success is dependent upon the organization's commitment to take action based on the results.

Typical areas of measurement for employee satisfaction and enthusiasm for work include:

- **Engagement:** Are employees excited about their work, willing to recommend the organization to others as a place to work, and do they plan to stay?
- **Supportive supervisor:** Do supervisors lead with fairness, provide feedback and recognition, explain changes, and listen and respond to employee ideas?
- **Trust and collaboration:** Do team members trust one another and work toward a common goal? Is collaboration and communication across functions/departments effective?
- **Visionary leadership:** Does senior leadership communicate with openness and share a compelling vision for the future?
- **Conditions to do the best work:** Do employees have the tools, resources and clear priorities to do their best work?

- **Growth and autonomy:** Do employees have input and feel encouraged to share new ideas? Do they see opportunities to develop their skills and advance their careers?
- **Burnout and resilience:** Does the hospital support my well-being? Is the amount of stress I experience reasonable?
- **Quality of care:** Would I recommend the hospital as a good place to receive care? Do the actions of senior management show that patient safety is a top priority?

### **The Board's Role in Employee Satisfaction and Engagement**

Human resources play a critical role in any organization's ability to fulfill its mission and vision, but in few industries is it more prominent than health care. Board oversight is essential because workforce strategies, recruitment and retention are critical to strategic success. But according to a recent study, there are varying viewpoints among boards about whether the organization's human capital falls within the board's oversight responsibility or should belong exclusively at the human resources and management level. Forward-looking boards see the shifts taking place in the health care workforce as an opportunity to build employer-employee relationships, strengthen the organization's culture, and leverage human resources strategies as a competitive differentiator.

According to the study, 80 percent of board members spend more time discussing talent strategy than they did just five years ago. But there's still much room for improvement. For example, approximately 30 percent of board members surveyed reported they are either unsure or unable to articulate their company's cultural strengths and weaknesses. Now, more than ever, boards must build employee satisfaction, engagement and organizational culture into their strategic discussions. The hospital or health system's mission, vision and strategies should be aligned with the organization's culture, understood by all employees, and supported by employee behaviors.

### **Employee Engagement: Questions for Board Discussion**

- Does the board set the tone for the strategic importance of human capital by dedicating the appropriate level of time and attention to employee satisfaction and engagement?
- Does the board understand the connection between employee engagement and patient safety and satisfaction, and allocate resources and priorities appropriately as a result?
- Does the board have the necessary expertise, education, perspectives and experience to provide effective oversight and direction in the area of human resources?
- Does the board and senior leadership understand workforce trends occurring in health care, and have strategies and plans to address those trends? Is the leadership team driving the necessary shifts in culture, training and development to be prepared for the future?
- Is human capital and talent strategy included in discussions about strategy and risk?
- Does the board know the future skills needed to successfully achieve the hospital or health system's strategic objectives? Is there a plan for how to acquire and develop those skill sets?

- Have appropriate and meaningful human capital and talent-related metrics been identified? If so, how often does the board review those metrics? Does the board compare the organization's employee engagement and satisfaction metrics with other healthcare-specific benchmarks?

Special thanks to The Walker Company and governWell™ for use of *Building a Strong Workforce: The Board's Role in Employee Satisfaction and Engagement*. Additional trustee resources are available in [Kansas governWell](#) and in the [Trustees' section](#) of the KHA website.

**Register Now for the Trustee Webinar: Legal Issues Challenging Hospital Boards – Dec. 1**  
[Program Brochure](#): Trustee Webinar: *Legal Issues Challenging Hospital Boards*

**Description:** During this trustee webinar, Blane Markley, partner, and Laura Bond, of counsel, Spencer Fane LLP, will provide an overview of the most common legal issues hospital boards encounter. Topics include avoiding liability, recognizing potential conflicts of interest, protecting the confidentiality and the boards' role in addressing legal challenges in the health care industry.

**Target Audience:** This webinar is designed for senior-level administrators, hospital trustees and others interested in hospital governance.

**Contact:** The [KHA Education Department](#) at (785) 233-7436, if you have questions.

**REGISTER NOW**

### **CMS Releases Emergency Regulation on COVID-19 Vaccination**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [released](#) the [interim final rule](#) with a comment period requiring COVID-19 vaccination of eligible staff at health care facilities participating in Medicare and Medicaid programs. The requirements apply to approximately 76,000 providers and cover more than 17 million health care workers across the country. The requirement impacts those Medicare entities regulated by CMS (such as hospitals, hospices, rural health clinics, etc.).

All eligible staff are required to have their first dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine or a one-dose vaccine by Dec. 5, 2021, before providing any care, treatment or other services. Full vaccination for all staff is required by Jan. 4, 2022. This timeline matches that of the OSHA-ETS for employers of more than 100 persons and the updated timeline for federal contractors. The [Interim Final Rule with Comment Period](#) in the *Federal Register* is available for download. External FAQs are posted to the [CMS Current Emergencies page](#) under *Clinical & Technical Guidance* for all health care providers.

The Kansas Hospital Association and our legal counsel are working on a number of resources for KHA members as they address the federal vaccine mandate. Resources will include sample language for policies and procedures, internal and external talking points, and additional resources such as language around exemptions, etc. We will push these resources out as soon as they are available, with many ready by Friday, Nov. 12. Resources on the vaccine mandate, including the toolkit and previously released information from CMS, are online.

### **Trustee Resources and Consultation at Your Fingertips**

We encourage you to take advantage of state and national governance resources from the Kansas Hospital Association's governWell™. [Kansas governWell](#) contains valuable governance programs, board briefs, videos, templates and tools that will enable your board to practice better governance and ensure better health care for your community. Kansas hospital staff and trustees will need to login to this website to get access to the free resources and consultation services. Go to [Kansas governWell](#) and enter username: kansastrustee, password: 1governWell+.

We are passionate about supporting hospital boards as they lead, serve and carry out their vital governance responsibilities. We believe these trusted resources and assessments, combined with consults from our governWell advisors, will result in greater success in governance performance and leadership development. In addition to KHA, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, in partnership with Healtworks, is supporting [Kansas governWell](#). Federal funds were provided through KDHE-BCHS-FLEX Program. The FLEX program is managed by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

### **Hear the Stories and Learn the Recipes from Former White House Chef**

With help from the American Hospital Association, the Kansas Hospital Association has secured former White House Chef Marti Mongiello for a special KHA-PAC fundraising event. He will share stories from the White House, answer your questions and prepare a salted caramel pecan pie with Walkers shortbread cookie crust and a pumpkin martini. All proceeds from this event will go toward your hospital KHA-PAC goal.

The KHA-PAC Steering Committee suggested this virtual program start late enough in the day so members could watch it from work or home. KHA will email both recipes to donors in advance. Participants can prepare the recipes alongside Chef Mongiello so they are ready for Thanksgiving festivities. Don't miss this fun event!

Please join us from 4:00-5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 23. The [KHA-PAC](#) needs your support to meet our 2021 goals!

Your donation of \$100 or more will serve as your registration. 2021 KHA-PAC Donors of \$350 or more will automatically receive connection instructions. Email [Cindy Samuelson](#) if you have questions about your donation.



[Program details and registration information](#) also are online.

### **Will We See You In-Person for the Rural Health Symposium?**

[Program Brochure](#): Rural Health Symposium

**Description:** Register now to attend the Rural Health Symposium on Nov. 18, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Wichita Airport in Wichita. Rural health care providers are constantly facing new challenges and fewer resources. The purpose of this symposium is to provide attendees with the skills, ideas and information necessary to survive in the rapidly changing world of rural health care.

Session topics include the following:

- Repairing the U.S. Health Care Workforce
- Networking Roundtable Discussions
- Critical Access Hospital Post COVID-19 Operational Strategies
- State and Federal Legislative Updates
- Employee Engagement through Financial Wellness

Target Audience: Senior-level administrators, hospital trustees and others interested in rural health issues.

**Contact:** The [KHA Education Department](#) at (785) 233-7436.



### **Trustees Invited to KHA Advocacy Day**

Join Kansas Hospital Association staff, state legislators and Kansas hospital executives at our 2022 Advocacy Day on Jan. 18, in Topeka. This is your opportunity to visit with elected officials about the health care issues facing Kansas hospitals. Join us to discuss how we can help shape the future of health care for Kansans. We encourage CEOs, senior staff and hospital trustees to attend this event.

### **Save the Date – Critical Issues Summit for Hospital Boards**

Mark your calendars for the 2022 Critical Issues Summit for Hospital Boards, March 3 and 4, 2022, in Wichita. The Critical Issues Summit, hosted by the Kansas Hospital Association, brings together hospital leadership and trustees from across the state and promotes the importance of good governance practices. This event provides top-notch speakers, educational sessions and discussions on the most critical topics facing hospitals, today.

### **Willis Heck and Eight Other Kansas Trustees Recognized**

It is with pleasure that the Kansas Hospital Association recognizes hospital trustees who provide an exemplary contribution through their leadership and governance. Hospitals across the state nominated individuals for the Trustee of the Year Award because they routinely went above and beyond the call of duty. This year, nine deserving trustees from across Kansas were nominated as Trustees of the Year:

- Joe Barnes, Smith County Memorial Hospital, Smith Center
- Matt Floersch, Ascension Via Christi Hospital Manhattan, Inc., Manhattan
- Michael Flores, Ascension Via Christi Hospitals Wichita, Inc., Wichita
- Willis Heck, NMC Health, Newton
- Phil Jarred, Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center, Chanute
- Jesse Luckie, Ashland Health Center, Ashland
- Jim Parrish, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka
- Judith Reynolds, Rush County Memorial Hospital, La Crosse
- Jessie Wyrill, Phillips County Health Systems, Phillipsburg

Based on the recommendation from a committee of KHA member CEOs and hospital trustees, the KHA Board of Directors selected Willis Heck, board chair at NMC Health, Newton, as the 2021 Trustee of the Year. A donation was given to the NMC Health Initiatives Fund in his honor.

Willis Heck, retired educator from Newton and Parsons, served on the then Newton Medical Center – now NMC Health Board of Directors for 19 years in two interrupted terms. Willis is known for being a great listener, gathering critical information in advance, and avoiding the temptation to stand in support or opposition until he gets all the facts – traits invaluable to a contemporary hospital board. Above all, he understands how to work with other people to get things done. He has an uncanny IQ for gaining cooperation and consensus-building. He is detail-oriented and does not lose sight of the big picture; therefore, emerging trends do not catch him by surprise.

In addition to his service at NMC Health, Willis has faithfully served KHA on the KHA Hospital Leadership and Governance Committee. He believes this committee is essential because it shapes the knowledge base for Kansas hospital trustees. He was part of this committee when it initiated its "Kansas governWell" project. The educator-at-heart in him understood the importance of adding intellectual and practical tools for hospital trustees and for co-locating it in an easy-to-use online environment. Through his years of work on the KHA Leadership and Governance Committee, he has helped to ensure that trustees for every Kansas hospital have numerous resources readily available to them. And he further helped to ensure trustees would have an annual educational conference devoted to the issues and concerns facing all hospitals. Through his tireless and generous spirit of service, he helped make certain every Kansas hospital trustee has a level playing field of knowledge and resources to guide success.

Congratulations to Willis Heck all of these exemplary trustees. Thank you for making a difference!

**Trustees Play an Essential Role in Advocacy**

As a trustee, you play an important role in advocating for your hospital. The Kansas Hospital Association provides some direct opportunities at state and federal levels for you to express your thoughts on policies important to hospitals and health care providers in your community. KHA provides information about the Federal Delegation and State Legislators. Annually, KHA helps provide our member organizations and their leadership with information on our legislative priorities. Occasionally, trustees will receive a KHA Grassroots Advocacy Alert allowing you to directly express your thoughts on policies at state or federal levels. If you are interested in receiving KHA's policy-related newsletters, email Jan Fenwick at [jfenwick@kha-net.org](mailto:jfenwick@kha-net.org).