

# A CHECKLIST FOR HOSPICE BOARDS FACING A NATIONAL CRISIS

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***“If each level in an organization’s hierarchy emulates the one above it, then an organization can never be better than its board.” - Scott Killingsworth***

In a time of crisis, high-performing boards don’t wait to see what others do or worry that they are over-reacting. They distinguish themselves by claiming their role as strong and supportive partners of their chief executives, keeping a long-term perspective, mitigating risk, reassuring stakeholders and ensuring that the organization is ready to address foreseeable ethical issues. Proactive boards will serve their duty well by assessing themselves using the following roles that a high-impact board can perform.

## 1. A High-Performing Board is a Strong Partner to Chief Executive

- Adopts appropriate reporting expectations and channels in both directions
- Serves as a sounding board, not a worry-wart
- Focuses on the long-term, testing scenarios and assumptions
- Takes on external communication and advocacy roles as requested
- Sets and reiterates clear goals and priorities
- Ensures that its meetings are well-planned and effective
- Models its messages with calm and clarity

## 2. A High-Performing Board Is Proactive and Mitigates Risk

- Ensures that there are designated successors in case of illness or burn out
- Reviews contingency plans with a lens toward worker shortages, infection of patients already on service and/or their family members, shortages of equipment and supplies, and probable scams; strategizes about avoiding worst-case scenarios
- Considers financial contingencies such as lines of credit and one-time philanthropic support to cover sudden shortfalls in revenue
- Reviews fundraising plans, anticipating loss of some sources and identifying new sources
- Assures flexibility and security of telecommunications for new demands of remote access

### 3. A High-Performing Board Sets its Sights on the Long-Term

- Ensures that reforecasting financial performance is an ongoing discipline
- Takes into account supply-chain disruption and its impact on costs and impact on service volumes
- Builds trust through transparency
- Prominently places patient and family, volunteer and employee safety and well-being at the forefront
- Thinks creatively about new and different ways to flexibly use staff and volunteers to address evolving unmet needs in its communities that are revealed as the pandemic unfolds

### 4. A High-Performing Board Reassures Key Stakeholders

- Communicates regularly with stakeholders about plans and how they can help:
  - Patients and families
  - Employees
  - Volunteers
  - Major donors/funders
  - Referral sources/strategic partners
- Models transparency by sharing information

### 5. A High-Performing Board Ensures That the Organization is Prepared for Ethical Dilemmas

- Prepares for ethical dilemmas such as
  - Triage of equipment/care
  - Employee illness versus desire to help
  - Family obligations versus work demands

High-performing boards are a strategic benefit to their organizations in a time of crisis. To find out more about how your board can reach its full potential on an ongoing basis, see <https://www.integrity3d.com/resources/a-critical-need-for-high-impact-boards/> or check out the Hospice Governance Academy at <https://www.integrity3d.com/hga/>.

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### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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- Coronavirus and Nonprofits: Challenges & Resources, Linda Rosenthal, J.D., For Purpose Law Group, March 13, 2020  
<https://www.forpurposelaw.com/coronavirus-nonprofits-challenges-resources/>
- Nonprofit Governance: Coronavirus and COVID-19, Gene Takagi, NEO Law Group, March 11, 2020  
[http://www.nonprofitlawblog.com/nonprofit-governance-coronavirus-and-covid-19/?utm\\_medium=twitter&utm\\_source=dlvr.it](http://www.nonprofitlawblog.com/nonprofit-governance-coronavirus-and-covid-19/?utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=dlvr.it)
- Help for Nonprofits During the Coronavirus and Uncertain Economic Times, The Chronicle of Philanthropy, updated periodically  
<https://www.philanthropy.com/specialreport/help-for-nonprofits-during-the/231?cid=rclink>
- Covid-19 Implications for Business, McKinsey,  
<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/risk/our-insights/covid-19-implications-for-business?cid=other-eml-alt-mip-mck&hlkid=6f9b60b51188400690f56d38254f8f96&hctky=2860694&hdpid=5050ca14-6551-46ec-b11f-d856171a3253>

### DISCUSSION GUIDE

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1. How are we maintaining and/or reformulating a long-term focus without getting in the way of day-to-day crisis management?
2. Are we modelling calm and clear communication which builds trust and reassures?
3. What are the messages that we want to be sending key stakeholders? Are we unintentionally sending mixed messages?
4. What ways can we look outside of our traditional set of services to ensure that we're meeting our vision and mission to the community – either on our own or in collaboration with others?