

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2017

Effective leadership and governance for system transformation

West Durham Family Health Team

Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence and inspiration.



West Durham Family Health Team takes leadership seriously, with a board of directors that believes in a patient-centred approach to decision-making. The first test of any proposal is whether it has a positive impact on patients.

This commitment to sound leadership manifests itself in several ways, including a determination to be proactive, rather than reactive, in addressing patient needs and a belief that leadership training and education is as important for board members as it is for managers. Change management is an ongoing feature of the board's operations, and there are processes in place to facilitate it. For

example, a skills matrix is an important tool to provide an inventory of current strengths and gaps in effective board structure. The effectiveness of the board and its members is also evaluated annually using a self-assessment tool.

One gap in the board's strength identified by the matrix is the absence of non-physician members, especially patients and caregivers. This year, the board is investigating the inclusion of patients, caregivers or other community members to be more responsive to patient needs. A by-law review was the first step, followed by consideration of the skills mix necessary to meet the strategic plan goals. The board's proactive approach to building its capacity and role awareness should allow for a smooth transition to a more inclusive governance model.

Part of capacity building is training, and the board continues to look to external experts in governance and leadership. Ongoing team-building exercises are creating a culture of transparency while improving communication and building trust, mutual respect and collegiality. There is now an orientation/training manual, so board newcomers can understand the culture and learn the requisite skills needed for true participation in decision-making.

West Durham FHT is open to sharing these processes with other boards. The team believes that "*the culture of the board ultimately determines whether WDFHT will be a high functioning and successful organization.*"

The board has also renewed its commitment to strengthening community partnerships by reaching out to other agencies and organizations.

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These efforts add up to a board that's created a climate of respect and trust that trickles down; the commitment to improvement has resulted in low staff turnover, which should be valued and applauded.

Key Facts:

- Annual evaluation of board effectiveness as a whole and by individual
- Evaluation identifies gaps that go into creating work plan for the coming year
- Created a skills matrix that doubles as succession planning tool
- Board orientation/training manual developed
- Fosters respectful environments for discussion and dissent