



# Operating Guidelines of the National Consumer Advisory Board (NCAB) and the NCAB Steering Committee

Approved June 14, 2007; Revised April 3, 2012; Revised March 14, 2013; Revised May 28, 2014; Revised June 2, 2016; Revised June 22, 2017; Revised June 13, 2018; Revised June 20, 2023

## Article 1 - Name

The name of the organization will be the “National Consumer Advisory Board,” also known as NCAB. The small group of leaders guiding the activities of NCAB will be known as the NCAB Steering Committee.

## Article 2 - Definitions

For the purposes of these Operating Guidelines, the following definitions apply:

- Consumer: A homeless or formerly homeless person who is/has received care from a Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) agency.
- Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) agencies: Organizations that provide health care and/or respite care for homeless individuals. These organizations are not required to receive any specific funding stream to be considered Health Care for the Homeless agencies.
- Homeless Person: “an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing.” [Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C., 254b)]
- Local Consumer Advisory Board (CAB): Consumer Advisory Boards are organized groups of currently and formerly homeless consumers of HCH programs that are involved in the governance of an HCH.
- National Conference: the annual conference organized for grantees of the federal HCH program by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
- National Health Care for the Homeless Council (referred to as NHCHC or National HCH Council): a nonprofit membership organization that is the legal body through which NCAB operates.
- NCAB Steering Committee: The NCAB Steering Committee operates as a standing committee of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, and all members of NCAB are individual members of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council (see Article IV, Section 1).
- Voting: as used in these rules, unless otherwise described, voting refers to participation in the consensus decision-making process. This process allows for decisions by majority vote when consensus cannot be reached.

## Article 3 - Purpose

The purpose of the National Consumer Advisory Board is to organize the consumers of Health Care for the Homeless services so that they have a voice in national issues involving the health care of homeless persons, to assist the members

in becoming more involved in their local Consumer Advisory Boards and to be a clearinghouse of information relating to homeless health care.

## **Article 4 - Membership**

### **Section 1—Membership requirements:**

Membership is open to anyone who is a member of NHCHC. Designated Project voting members must:

1. Be homeless or formerly homeless; and
2. Have accessed services at a Health Care for the Homeless agency; and
3. Fill out an application for membership online at the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. That application is available on the NHCHC website (nhchc.org).

It is preferable that NCAB members are involved in a local CAB and/or organizational governance, but this is not required for participation as a member of NCAB.

All NCAB members are individual members of the National HCH Council and are eligible for election to the Council's Board of Directors. Only members who meet the qualifications as a voting member will be eligible for officer positions on the NCAB Steering Committee.

There is no requirement that dues be paid by NCAB members or any other individual members of the National HCH Council.

### **Section 2—Voting:**

1. Decisions by NCAB will be made through the consensus decision making process (see addendum on consensus decision making). NCAB cannot accommodate proxy voting because the consensus decision-making mechanism requires live conversation and active participation by all parties. The consensus decision making process will be used for all decisions that have an impact on the direction of NCAB or on the conduct of a meeting of NCAB. The consensus procedure described in the addendum shall be followed for major decisions, as determined by the chairperson of the meeting at which the decision is being considered. For decisions that are less important, a more informal approach may be used.
2. For an NCAB Membership meeting, a quorum is defined as the members who are present. For an NCAB Steering Committee meeting, a quorum is a majority of the members of the Steering Committee.
3. Staff are available for support, but do not participate in the voting process.

### **Section 3-Communication:**

1. Communication with members will be conducted by e-mail and by posting notices on the website of the National HCH Council. Members are responsible for informing NCAB of changes in contact information.

## **Article 5 - Meetings**

### **Section 1—Full NCAB Meetings**

1. An annual membership meeting will take place at the National HCH Council conference.
2. Notice will be distributed to the membership at least 90 days prior to the conference.

### **Section 2—NCAB Steering Committee and Other NCAB Meetings**

1. The Steering Committee will meet monthly by conference call and may meet face-to-face one or more times per year (see Article V, Section 1), as the budget allows.
2. The Chairperson may establish working committees to accomplish the organization's mission. NCAB committees will typically meet by conference call.
3. Each member of the NCAB Steering Committee is strongly encouraged to participate on committees of the National HCH Council. If an NCAB member joins a committee, he or she will be notified by e-mail of the scheduled meetings.
4. Other meetings may be arranged as needed throughout the year.

## **Article 6 - Officers**

### **Section 1 – Officers**

The membership of the Steering Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, two Co-Chairs, a Peer Advocate, three Members-at-Large and 5 Regional Representatives who serve as Officers of the National Consumer Advisory Board. The Steering Committee is given authority to make decisions for the benefit of the entire NCAB membership. The Steering Committee may appoint such other officers and agents as it shall deem necessary, and who shall have such authority and exercise such powers and perform such duties as shall be determined by the NCAB Steering Committee.

### **Section 2 – Terms of Office**

Each individual may serve no more than two consecutive terms (or more than five years) in any one Steering Committee position. An individual may serve up to but no more than twelve years consecutively on the Steering Committee. An individual must take a two-year period off between each consecutive 12-year period of service on the NCAB Steering Committee.

### **Section 3 – Election of Officers**

1. Any voting-eligible member of NCAB may run for office (see Article IV, Section 1).
2. Elections will be held every year at the Annual Meeting during the National HCH Conference. Steering Committee member nominees will be presented to the membership by the Nominating Committee to be voted on by consensus.
3. The Chairperson will appoint a Nominating Committee to manage the officer election process. The membership will be notified of the positions coming open at least 6 weeks prior to the annual meeting. Members can nominate themselves or someone else, but the candidate must send in a biography for the nomination to be considered by NCAB for election purposes.
4. The Nominating Committee will develop a recommended slate of Steering Committee candidates and will distribute it to the NCAB membership at least one week prior to the NCAB Business Meeting at the National Conference; this distribution will include the nomination statements of each candidate, whether or not chosen for the slate.
5. The Nominating Committee will develop a slate that includes nominees for the following terms of office (as needed on a rotating basis):
  - Chairperson – Two-year term
  - Co-Chair – two-year term
  - Co-Chair – two-year term
  - Peer Advocate – two-year term
  - Member at Large – one-year term;
  - Member at Large – two-year term

- Member at Large – two-year term
  - Regional Representative – Regions 1 & 2; Regions 3 & 4; Regions 5 & 7; Regions 6 & 8; Regions 9 & 10
6. The following terms shall be staggered so that both positions are not elected in the same year: Chairperson and Peer Advocate, the two Co-Chairs, and the two 2-year Member-at-Large positions.
  7. The following Regional Representative position terms will be staggered so that all positions are not elected in the same year: Regions 3+4, and 9+10 are elected in odd numbered years (conference in DC); Regions 1+2, 5&7, and 6+8 are elected in even numbered years.
  8. No more than 2 Steering Committee Members (all positions) are eligible from each Health Care for the Homeless site.

#### **Section 4 – Duties of Officers, Immediate Past Chair, and Peer Mentors**

1. The Chairperson shall be responsible for:
  - a. Preparing the agenda, with the assistance of the co-chairs and the Consumer Engagement Manager, and preside over all meetings of NCAB and the Steering Committee;
  - b. Communicating monthly with the co-chairs about NCAB Steering Committee and their projects;
  - c. Designating committees and sub-committees; as necessary, to carry out the policies and objectives of the NCAB Steering Committee. The chair, by virtue of their position, will also be a member of all committees and sub-committees, except for the Nominating Committee;
  - d. Serving as a member of the National HCH Council Board of Directors and Governing Membership.
2. The Co-Chairs shall be responsible for:
  - a. Attending the agenda planning calls for NCAB and Steering Committee Meetings;
  - b. Communicating monthly with the chair about NCAB Steering Committee and their projects;
  - c. Facilitating leadership and task management regarding the Steering Committees’ work plan as designated by the chair;
  - d. Working with the peer advocate in communicating with the Steering Committee;
  - e. Collaborating with the chair in appointing committee chairs;
  - f. Performing the duties of the chair in the chair's absence, and when doing so, will have all the powers of, and be subject to all the restrictions of the chair.
3. The Peer Advocate shall be responsible for:
  - a. Ensuring that Steering Committee Members and Regional Representatives are fulfilling their expectations;
  - b. Working with the Operating Guidelines Committee and holding NCAB accountable to the work plan and by-laws;
  - c. Calling Steering Committee Members each month to check in, and after they miss any meetings or calls ;
  - d. Supporting the Steering Committee, NCAB projects, and the mission of NCAB;
  - e. Assist with the development and distribution of communications for NCAB; specifically ensuring that our communications are accessible to all individual members of NCAB.
4. Members-at-Large shall be responsible for:
  - a. All members-at-large will report to the NCAB Steering Committee updates from all NCAB Sub-Committees and NHCHC committees, and assist with any challenges they may face;
  - b. Identify needs of NCAB and report those to the Steering Committee and/or staff as appropriate;
  - c. Help regional representatives with contacting NCAB members to update information, offer assistance, check-in, follow-up on technical assistance, etc. as requested;

- d. The two-year member-at-large will be responsible for chairing one of the Steering Committees' Sub-Committees; and the one-year member-at-large will be responsible for promoting HCH events; including HPMD, HCH Day, and Summer Solstice events nationwide.
5. Regional Representatives shall be responsible for:
- a. Representing 2 HRSA regions each to the Steering Committee – 1 & 2; 3 & 4; 5 & 7; 6 & 8; 9 & 10;
  - b. Communicating regularly with CABs and consumers in their respective regions, and communicating regularly with the Steering Committee about regional news;
  - c. Working with other consumer leaders in their regions to ensure continuity of consumer leadership;
  - d. Identifying and engaging consumer leaders to assist in the duties of connecting with local CABs and ensuring consumer participation at regional events;
  - e. Submitting quarterly reports outlining interactions with local consumers and CABs;
6. Immediate Past Chair of NCAB may participate in an advisory and support role for one additional year after their last term is complete. The purpose of this role is to ensure that the incoming Chair has the support and guidance they need to transition to their new role effectively. The Immediate Past Chair will not participate in voting or be able to block consensus during Steering Committee meetings. They will work with the current Chair to develop the call agendas with the current Chair taking the lead. The Immediate Past Chair will also create an agenda for their time working together to get the current Chair up-to-speed on all of the activities that the Chair works on throughout the year.
7. Peer Mentors:
- a. Provide guidance and advice to the Steering Committee (in a non-voting position);
  - b. Are invited to attend all monthly Steering Committee calls and receive minutes from all meetings;
  - c. Are invited to join Steering Committee sub-committees, but must be invited by the Steering Committee;
  - d. Are not eligible for Council funds to attend the Conference on behalf of NCAB;
  - e. Are not eligible to attend the Steering Committee Face to Face Individual Meeting.
    - i. Eligibility for this role includes the following criteria:
      - 1. Must have been on the Steering Committee for 4 years;
      - 2. Demonstrated commitment to the NCAB mission.
    - ii. The role will have the following structure:
      - 1. 3 Peer Mentor members are allowed at a time.
        - a. Note: these positions are not required to be filled but this is the maximum allowed.
      - 2. Terms will be for 1 year, 2 year, and 3 year terms, respectively.
    - iii. The role will be elected according to the following process:
      - 1. When a position is up, nominations will be included with the regular NCAB Steering Committee positions;
      - 2. Nominees will hold interviews with the Nominating Committee, as regular NCAB Steering Committee members do;
      - 3. The Nominating Committee will recommend a person for the slate, to be voted on at the NCAB Business Meeting at the National Conference.

## **Section 5 – Decision-Making Provisions**

NCAB and its Steering Committee will make decisions by consensus with a majority of members present to meet the quorum (see addendum on the consensus process, attached.)

## **Section 6 – Participation Expectations**

NCAB Steering Committee members are expected to participate in a minimum of 75% of the Steering Committee's monthly calls annually. The year starts on July 1 and runs through June 30, in conjunction with the fiscal year followed by NHCHC. While the Steering Committee is sympathetic to barriers to involvement, there will be no exceptions to this attendance rule and those who fail to meet it will be asked to step down. All NCAB Steering Committee members will be expected to notify the group of a planned absence and to find out and complete assigned tasks in a timely manner.

All NCAB Steering Committee members will keep the consensus process on track and are expected to respond to requests for reviewing, editing, commenting, or otherwise making sure the Council and other entities accurately represent the wishes of NCAB. Steering Committee members are expected to respond to 75% of the customary and reasonable requests per year, or they risk being asked to step down from their leadership role. Such tasks include, but are not limited to: review of the NCAB work plan and participation in designated workgroups, review of special projects initiated by NCAB such as consumer-focused policy documents, review and comment on NCAB Operating Guidelines and CAB Manual updates, review monthly conference call materials prior to calls, comment on meeting minutes, contribute to the NCAB section of the Quarterly Newsletter, provide information on local events such as Homeless Persons Memorial Day and HCH Day for distribution, planning, and other such activities as may continue to further the mission of NCAB.

The NCAB Steering Committee, under the direction of the Chairperson and with support from the Consumer Engagement Manager, will create a work plan each year that includes activities funded by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) and activities initiated by NCAB. In the October NCAB Steering Committee Meeting, Council staff will share and discuss HRSA funded activities that have been approved for the year and the NCAB Steering Committee will coordinate with Council staff to create a work plan that outlines formal NCAB Steering Committee involvement in HRSA funded activities as well as NCAB initiated activities. The work plan will include deadlines, job descriptions, and the names of NCAB Steering Committee volunteer leaders and will be completed and approved by October 31 of each year. All NCAB Steering Committee members will attend orientation/onboarding meetings organized and conducted by NCAB Steering Committee Officers between June and August of each calendar year. These meetings will include an overview of the Operating Guidelines with special emphasis on the job descriptions of each Steering Committee member.

NCAB Steering Committee members will provide technical support to local CABs, as requested by the National HCH Council. Requests received by the NCAB Steering Committee for technical assistance must go through NHCHC.

NCAB Steering Committee members will participate in leadership development opportunities offered by the National HCH Council as funds allow. Eligibility for travel subsidies will be contingent on satisfactory progress in meeting the goals of the NCAB Steering Committee, recommendations for revoking a subsidy will be brought by the Consumer Engagement Manager and approved by a quorum of the NCAB Steering Committee.

## **Section 7 – Removal of Officers**

The Steering Committee reserves the right to remove officers for non-participation. If consensus is not possible, removal requires a vote of five of the seven Steering Committee members. The vacated position is replaced by consensus of the Steering Committee and confirmed by the membership at the subsequent Annual Meeting.

## **ARTICLE 7 – NCAB Committees**

## **Section 1 – Committee Appointments**

NCAB members may at any time establish one or more committees of members for purposes that advise and inform the direction of NCAB and dissolve any such committees at any time; this is in addition to the Chairperson's authority to establish committees. The Chairperson shall appoint the members of committees and designate chairpersons who shall preside at all meetings of the committee and generally supervise the conduct of the committee's affairs. Standing committees shall consist of no less than three (3) members. Minutes will be kept on all committee meetings.

## **Section 2 - Committees, Composition and Description of Duties**

There shall be one standing committee, the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall consist of the NCAB Officers, and is empowered to act for NCAB. Other Ad-Hoc committees that convene at various times throughout the year include but are not limited to:

- Nominating Committee – selected by the Steering Committee Chair to review NCAB nominations for Steering Committee positions and input from NCAB membership subsequent to their posting. The Nominating Committee will prepare the slate for review by membership present at the Annual NCAB Business Meeting.
- Ellen Dailey Consumer Advocate Award Committee – selected from among previous Ellen Dailey Award winners to review nominations for this award and select (by consensus) the person or persons to be honored at the next National Conference with this award.

Any member of NCAB may suggest additional committees [to the NCAB Steering Committee or to National HCH Council staff] that are needed to facilitate involvement of the larger membership, improve the experience of consumers in leadership around the country, and otherwise further the mission of NCAB.

## **Section 3 – Duties and Powers of the Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee shall be responsible for the control and management of the affairs and interests of NCAB; for keeping NHCHC informed of all activities of NCAB; for complying with all reporting requirements of HRSA and NHCHC; for guiding NCAB so that the various provisions of these Operating Guidelines, including the purposes for which NCAB was organized, set forth herein, are complied with; and for making recommendations and suggesting programs.

## **Section 4 – Notice and Special Meetings**

Notice of any meetings of the NCAB Steering Committee shall be given at least five days in advance, delivered personally or by mail, email, phone, fax or nationally recognized overnight courier to each member at his/her address as it appears in the records of NCAB and NHCHC. Actions taken in improperly called meetings may be challenged by any member of the Steering Committee by requesting that the Chair call a special meeting to reconsider the action. If the Chair does not act to call a special meeting, any four Steering Committee members may jointly call a special meeting. In any special meeting, the meeting notice shall be provided in accordance with the usual provisions of these Operating Guidelines, and shall include a statement of the proposal to be considered in the special meeting. No other business than that stated in the meeting notice shall be conducted at a special meeting.

## **Section 5 – Vacancies**

Any vacancy occurring in the Steering Committee shall be filled, for the unexpired portion of the term, by a majority vote of the remaining Steering Committee members. In this circumstance, the Steering Committee may elect any member of NCAB, without a formal nominating process.

## **Section 6 – Absence from Meetings**

Any member of the Steering Committee who shall be absent from three consecutive meetings without adequate excuse acceptable to the Steering Committee shall be deemed to have resigned from the NCAB Steering Committee.

## **Article 8 - Special Provisions**

### **Section 1 – Payment**

Individuals shall receive no payment for their service as officers or members of NCAB.

### **Section 2 – Operating Guidelines**

1. These Operating Guidelines will not take effect unless ratified by a consensus of those present at the NCAB business meeting during the National HCH Conference subsequent to the most recent revision date.
2. Amendments to the Operating Guidelines.
  - a. An Operating Guidelines committee will convene to review the Operating Guidelines and recommend changes to be voted on by NCAB membership each year prior to the NHCHC conference.
  - b. The committee will share recommended changes with the Steering Committee prior to distributing them to NCAB membership ahead of the membership meeting at the NHCHC conference.
  - c. Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing, by email, to each member at least 7 days in advance of the meeting upon which such amendment is to be voted upon.
  - d. These Operating Guidelines may be amended at any Membership meeting of NCAB by a consensus of the members of NCAB.

## **Article 9 - Relationship with the National Health Care for the Homeless Council**

1. NCAB is an autonomous committee of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
2. The NCAB Steering Committee Chairperson or designee represents NCAB on the Board of Directors of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
3. The NCAB Steering Committee Chairperson and the Co-Chairs will represent NCAB on the Governing Membership of NHCHC.
4. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council provides staff support to NCAB and the NCAB Steering Committee as needed and as budget allows.

## **Addendum - USING CONSENSUS**

### **What Exactly Is Consensus?**

Consensus is a decision making process which equalizes power over a group of people. Instead of simply voting for an item, and having the majority of the group get their way, the group has to sit down and get a solution to a problem that EVERYONE is ok with. People take different ideas and we see how we feel about them. The solution that the group thinks is the most positive gets chosen, unless a member of the group finds the solution totally unacceptable. Consensus is based on compromise, and the ability to find common ground. Consensus is a decision making process that works creatively to include all persons making the decision. It is the most powerful decision process as all members agree to the final decision. This is truly radical democracy as all participants have a direct voice and veto power.

## How it works:

1. Presentation
  - a. The proposal is presented as clearly as possibly by its author.
2. Clarifying Questions
  - a. Questions are asked by anyone about the proposal to make sure that everyone understands it before you discuss it.
3. Discussion
  - a. The proposal is discussed and debated. Possible amendments to the proposal are made at this time. The author(s) always reserves the right to alter the proposal as s/(t)he(y) see fit. (If it is only a caucus, this is the last step.)
4. Take general feelings on the proposal
  - a. These can be registered through a straw poll, by a round robin or once-round all members, or through some signal such as thumbs up/middle/down. This can be used to modify the original proposal, consider going forth with a vote, or scrapping it altogether.
5. Call for Major Objection or Strong Concern
  - a. A single Major Objection blocks the proposal from passing. If you have a major objection it means that you cannot live with the proposal if it passes. A major objection isn't an "I don't really like it" or an "I liked the other idea better." It is an "I cannot live with this proposal if it passes, and here's why ... " A thumbs down in general feelings doesn't mean that it is a major objection, a proposal can still pass if there is a thumbs down with no major objections. Further discussion and amendment may follow the pronouncement of a Major Objection but if the objection remains after all discussion is exhausted then the proposal is blocked from going forward.
  - b. A Strong Concern does not block the passing of a proposal, but it is a public statement of why you dislike it (so you can say 'I told you so!' later). All strong concerns are written in the minutes of the meeting or otherwise recorded by the group note-taker.