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Colorado Hospital Association

CHA Conflict Resolution Policy: Representation vs. Advocacy

Issue:

The Colorado Hospital Association, (CHA), serves as both a representative of and an advocate for its members. On issues where there is clear consensus about an issue, the Association represents and advocates the position approved by the CHA Board on behalf of the membership. In situations where there are incompatible positions among the membership, the Board (or the Executive Committee) may identify the issue as one for which "Representation Only" is the appropriate position. Member hospitals are strongly encouraged to inform CHA when they advocate a position contrary to CHA.

Discussion:

The ever changing health care environment presents challenges to hospitals and leads in some instances to competition and conflict between members. CHA and its member hospitals and health systems have made significant progress in striking the right balance in providing a strong, unified voice to keep Colorado hospitals at the center of public policy development on health care issues. If not managed appropriately however, divisive issues can damage the overall effectiveness of CHA in the public policy arena.

To represent and advocate on behalf of its members is an essential function of CHA. Representation and advocacy are closely aligned, yet separate functions, that should be combined whenever possible. However, some health care issues today do not lend themselves to consensus among a diverse membership, and may in fact divide the members. Without consensus on issues, the Association may be forced to steer away from important public policy debates. When the Association removes itself from public policy debates, or advocates only one side of a polarized issue, it loses credibility with government, legislators, members, and the public.

Recognizing the vital role of advocacy and the importance of member unity, it is incumbent upon the elected leadership of CHA to take all necessary steps to reach consensus as an organization on competitive issues. Consensus is defined as an affirmative vote of not less than two thirds of the membership of the Board at any meeting of the Board.

The following steps will be employed in order to reach consensus on divisive and/or competitive issues:

Designation of an issue as “representation only” does not prevent members from advocating on behalf of their particular position as long as they comply with existing CHA policy development and decision making process that states a member will not actively oppose a CHA position.

When an issue is determined to be “Representation Only” by the Board, the following action will be employed:

CHA will “represent” those diverse member opinions to policy makers by presenting both sides of the issue and explaining the policy implications of each side. This may include discussions with legislators and policy makers, testimony at public hearings and the dissemination of written material that presents the issue from both sides.

CHA will serve as spokesperson for its members and represent that there is more than one side to the issue and that there is no consensus.

The Association will not support or oppose a particular bill or public policy, but will give the pros and cons and impact of the proposed policy from the viewpoint of both opposing sides of the issue.

There will be no negative stigma attached to assignment of “representation only” to a particular issue, nor will limits be placed on representation on behalf of the issue.

A decision to focus CHA efforts on representation of a major issue will not limit advocacy on sub-issues where consensus exists, or from providing guidance and information describing the “least harm” aspects of any sub-issue.

If a “No position” position is taken, CHA will:

Inform legislators that consensus could not be reached on the issue and that the Association has voted to not speak on the issue.

Direct policy makers to members who represent the opposing sides of the issue.

Not oppose or speak in favor of a specific public policy or piece of legislation.

***Approved by the CHA Board of Trustees
November 17, 2006***