



## The 10-Minute Education Session

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**E**ducation on a variety of topics is the key to excellent governance, but we all know how difficult it is to fit into busy volunteer board members' schedules. From developing governance best practices to knowing more about the healthcare industry, education develops board members' knowledge, guides them to be better advocates and ambassadors for the organization, and enables them to successfully perform their fiduciary duties. So, what are some ways to ensure they have the right information?

MidMichigan Health offers educational opportunities in a variety of formats such as quarterly newsletters, alert emails of special interest, 10-minute education sessions, national speakers, annual retreats, reading materials, and more. This article focuses on incorporating the 10-minute education session into your board meetings.

At MidMichigan, every board meeting agenda begins with the 10-minute education session. For those meetings when a meal is served, the education takes place while board members eat, before the meeting is called to order.

These education sessions have to be a singularly focused topic that is relevant and of interest to the board, and that can be covered in this short amount of time. It is an opportunity to engage all members in a relatively small group forum where they hear the same information at the same time. Topics can come from a multitude of opportunities, such as current in-the-news healthcare-related items, new services offered by the organization, governance-related activities,

prior inquiries by board members, and aspects of healthcare reform.

Topics may even be more detailed information regarding something board members will be acting on later during the meeting or a subsequent meeting. This is an opportunity to help them make a more informed decision. Board members have found that these 10-minute sessions are a positive way to begin an engaging meeting.

For these sessions, there isn't any pre-meeting activity required by the board members. All information is presented during the session. Documents can be added to the beginning of the meeting book before the agenda for reference, but even that is not necessary. Presenters usually provide PowerPoint presentations, handouts, or just verbally present their information. MidMichigan has found that the more comfortable the presenters are with their material, the more engaged the board members are so it helps to be strategic with who you have present.

To ensure presenters have as much time as possible to develop their topic of education, MidMichigan has an education calendar with suggested topics throughout the year so everything is planned out well in advance. The challenge for the 10-minute session is that current hot topics can override scheduled topics. In these cases many times the scheduled topic can be turned into reading material and placed at the end of the meeting book. Having this flexibility can be helpful in the healthcare industry where things are constantly changing and these sessions are a great opportunity to address timely topics.

Based on MidMichigan's experience, suggestions for topics and presenters include:

- **Current events:** Information can come from a variety of resources such as news articles, The Governance Institute, or other research groups or publications your organization subscribes to. These topics can be presented by a governance support person or a staff member whose duties are closely related to the topic. For instance, if there is competitor activity in the news, the business development director can present the material and guide discussion.
- **New services:** It is a great opportunity for subject matter experts to share information regarding new equipment, services, projects, etc., with board members. The staff member can provide videos, brochures, or other marketing material to showcase what is new and help answer any questions.
- **Governance-related activities:** These 10-minute education sessions can be used to address governance-related activities. For example, we have used them to teach board members about updates in the board portal. It is critical that board members engage in the board portal to access pertinent information in a timely manner. These sessions have helped board members be more comfortable accessing the meeting books and other resources so they are more hands on in the governance process.
- **Prior inquiries:** It is important for board members to know that management is listening to them and responding to their inquiries. These education sessions are a perfect place to follow up with them and answer

their questions. The administrative leader of the group or a staff member closest to the topic of the inquiry can present the information.

- **Healthcare reform:** Board members need to know about and understand healthcare reform to effectively govern their organization. This is a good opportunity to present current requirement changes and the status of the hospital's or health system's compliance.

Don't forget the great resources at The Governance Institute. MidMichigan has had our account manager and other experts call into governance meetings to present information and have conversations with our members during the 10-minute sessions.

It's important to note that the education session should not be confused with the executive session, which is used by the board to address issues that are best discussed in private, to assure confidentiality, and for the board to talk openly about topics that require special treatment. Each MidMichigan board agenda includes an executive session at the end of the meeting, if needed. Executive session, by definition, is exclusive to board members, but others, such as professional advisors, may be invited to join for part or all of the session. The most common reasons for these sessions include executive performance and/or compensation review, personnel issues, and peer-to-peer board discussions.

As we all know, time is short and education is important, especially with everything going on in healthcare today. The 10-minute education session is one delivery method for engaging board members in a meaningful way.

*The Governance Institute thanks Leeza L. Bacon, M.B.A., Governance and Policy Supervisor at MidMichigan Health, for contributing this article. She can be reached at [Leeza.Bacon@midmichigan.org](mailto:Leeza.Bacon@midmichigan.org).*

