



INSIGHT SERVICE EXPERTISE

Trustee Certification and Education Programs

Only 10 states offer “true” trustee certification programs

Co - Authored by Luke McKee, Intern, and James A. Rice, Ph.D., FACHE, Managing Director & Senior Advisor

Below is information regarding 16 trustee certification and education programs organized by state and summaries of each program including program goals and motivators, competency models, the number of graduates, the rigor of the certification, and financial cost.

Of these 16 programs, only 10 states offer “true” trustee certification programs while other states offer varying levels and types of trustee education such as online courses, newsletters, and conferences and symposiums. Five of the ten “certification states” certify based on trustee self-attestations of completion of the program requirements and only the Texas and Arkansas programs include tests or quizzes. Program rigor and design varies significantly, but motivating factors and competencies are similar:

Motivations: a rapidly changing healthcare industry, increased scrutiny on healthcare organizations, encouragement of excellent governance.

Competencies: understanding the roles and responsibilities of hospital trustees, the healthcare environment, quality and patient safety issues, and understanding the board’s fiduciary responsibilities.

1. Alabama

The Alabama Hospital Trustee Certification Program

[View Sources](#)

Goals and Motivators:

- “Increasingly lenders, bond rating agencies, government officials and others are considering governance-related factors when dealing with hospitals. Not only have the

implications of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act been felt in publicly traded organizations, but the standards are quickly becoming the yardstick by which all governance is measured. By documenting compliance with governance standards, hospital leaders assure key stakeholders that they hold themselves to a higher standard.”

- “The Alabama Hospital Trustee Certification Program was developed to help hospitals ensure their governing board members are meeting basic criteria in terms of knowledge and participation.”

Competency Model:

Key topics include:

- Understanding mission and board responsibilities.
- Understanding the financial benchmarks
- Understanding the quality-related benchmarks
- Preparation for and attendance of board meetings and being a good ambassador for the hospital.

Number of Graduates:

Unknown

Rigor of Certification:

- Trustees complete a self assessment that measures participation, basic knowledge, continuing education and other skill sets vital to effective governance.
- Self-reported attestation of completion of the “Trustee Certification Checklist.
- Certificates are valid for one year.
- Hospital should provide education at board meetings, along with other opportunities for trustees to achieve the various certification requirements

Financial Details:

Annual fee of \$20.00/trustee. Fee is waived if the hospital is a member of the Alabama Council of Hospital Trustees (ACHT). This is \$400 per hospital and includes additional educational resources and newsletters.

2. Arizona, Idaho, Nevada & Others

Western Regional Trustee Symposium

[View Sources](#)

The Western Regional Trustee Symposium (WRTS) is a collaboration of the hospital associations from Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

Each state's participation varies. Some states also offer additional educational programming, but for many this symposium is the primary form of trustee education.

Goals and Motivators:

"Designed for hospital board members and executive leadership, the program broadens the participants' awareness of current healthcare trends that affect them, and how they serve their boards and communities."

Competency Model:

"Best practices of successful healthcare governance are shared for practical application in the boardroom."

Number of Graduates:

Varies significantly by state and by year.

Rigor of Certification:

Not certification just education.

"Attendees at this symposium will gain increased knowledge about many issues through educational sessions, networking, and information exchange with other trustees and executives."

Financial Details:

Usually ~\$500 per board member.

3. Arkansas

Best On Board Trustee Education and Certification Program

[View Sources](#)

Goals and Motivators:

- "With the constantly changing opportunities and challenges that characterize our industry today, hospital leaders must be prepared and able to make the right decisions to sustain that commitment to their patients, medical staff, and employees in an era of reform."
- "To enable hospital trustees and executives to establish a common foundational knowledge for governing their organization."

Competency Model:

Online classes through Best on Board with two levels:

- Level I - Essentials of Healthcare Governance
 - The Healthcare Environment and the Board's Fiduciary Role
 - Mission, Strategy, and Stakeholders
 - The Board's Role in Finance
 - The Board's Role in Quality and Patient Safety
 - The Board-CEO Relationship
 - Governance and Leadership Effectiveness
- Level II - The Quality Imperative.
 - Learn about the quality and safety imperative in healthcare and current efforts to improve performance.
 - Review the board's role and responsibilities for overseeing hospital quality and safety performance.
 - Learn about several levers of governance that boards and other leaders can use to ensure that their hospitals deliver quality, safe care and service to patients and other stakeholders.

Number of Graduates:

Unknown

Rigor of Certification:

- Participants can choose to take Best On Board's courses online or a "Bricks and Clicks" format.
- Course methods include quizzes, which when passed successfully, lead to certification by Best on Board that lasts three years.

Financial Details:

No cost.

4. Colorado

**Currently Colorado does not have a trustee certification program nor do they have plans to develop one in the near future.*

Educational Programs:

- Western Regional Trustee Symposium: this is not Colorado's primary focus of trustee education, but is marketed to Colorado hospital trustees with a handful attending each year.
- Colorado Hospital Association trustee education activities include:
 - Online Governance Portal developed by The Walker Company Healthcare Consulting. The portal has loads of article, education, tools and resources for trustees. They ask that hospital CEOs to distribute a login/password to their trustees.
 - Quarterly trustee newsletter: work with the Walker Company to develop a quarterly newsletter specifically for hospital trustees. It is distributed to hospital CEOs, asking them to pass along to their trustees.
 - Conferences: several conference throughout the year (Rural Hospital Conference, Annual Meeting and Patient Safety Leadership Congress) with information for trustees. Sometimes there are specific sessions for trustees. Most of the sessions are developed with the idea that they will be informative for trustees.

Number of Graduates:

"We get decent trustee participation at our meetings and great feedback from them. For example, at our Annual Meeting, 8% of participants were hospital trustees. Most are from small and rural hospitals."

- Laura Woodruff, VP Education and Member Development-CHA

5. Georgia

Hospital Trustee Community Accountability Education Certification Program

[View Sources](#)

- Martha Harrel, VP Educational Services - GHA

Goals and Motivators:

- "Recent failures in the governance leadership of prominent U.S. companies have weakened public confidence and shaken the foundation of governance in every major sector of American business. Boards of directors, including hospital governing boards of investor-owned, not-for-profit, freestanding and government-owned facilities now find themselves in the cross hairs."
- *"It has been a great program for us. Trustees and boards are much more engaged and know more about what it means and how to be a trustee"*- Martha Harrel, VP Educational Services

Competency Model:

- Preparation for board meetings
- Commitment to fiduciary duties of care, loyalty and obedience, and understand governance obligations to bylaws, accreditation standards and laws
- Commitment to Quality and Patient Safety
- Commitment to the Organization's Financial Health
- Commitment to Continuing Board Education
- Participation in performance evaluation of self, the board and the CEO
- Participation in advocacy efforts on behalf of your hospital and the health care industry

Number of Graduates:

300-600 Trustees each year become certified.

Rigor of Certification:

Self-reported attestation of:

- Completion of minimum education requirements.
 - *First year:* 12 hours of approved course work. Eight of these hours may

be from a trustee orientation program completed in a previous year.

- *Second year:* 8 hours of continuing board education. Every two years at least 4 of these hours must be at a face-to-face program.
- *Third+ year:* 8 hours of continuing board education but they may count committee time as part of the 8 hours.
- Meeting requirements of GHA Trustee Certification Checklist
- On-line educational programs can be utilized for board education.

Financial Details:

No Cost.

6. Iowa

Iowa Trustee Education Certification Program

[View Sources](#)

Goals and Motivators:

- “To help hospitals use governance best practices, promote the coordination of care and the best use of resources.”
- “To demonstrate to lawmakers, regulators, physicians, employees, the business community and other community stakeholders that Iowa hospitals: understand and embrace the need for governance accountability, govern according to a standard of excellence, and are willing to formally certify their adherence to governance best practices.”

Competency Model:

Curriculum includes:

- Health care environment and health care issues and trends
- Board’s roles and responsibilities
- Fiduciary duties of Care, Loyalty and Obedience
- Characteristics of high performing boards
- Board’s role in monitoring quality and patient safety
- Board’s role in strategic planning, medical staff relations, and finance.
- Board’s role in medical staff relations
- Federal and Iowa hospital law and regulation

Number of Graduates:

Unknown

Rigor of Certification:

Self-reported:

- Trustees completing the requirements for the IHA Trustee Education Certification for the first time or renewing their certification must complete 12 continuing board education hours (CBE).
- If an education component is included in a regularly scheduled board meeting, the time spent in the educational component will count toward CBE. (Minimum increment is 15 minutes)
- At least four (4) hours of the educational requirement must be completed in face to face programming.

Financial Details:

No Cost.

7. Michigan

MHA Excellence in Governance Fellowship

[View Sources](#)

- Erin Steward, VP MHA Health Foundation

*Described as fellowship program rather than certification.

Goals and Motivators:

- “Healthcare reform is here and with it comes a myriad of changes... It is no longer acceptable to be a “sitting” board member. Today, board members have to be active, engaged and, most importantly, informed.
- “Designed to make a good board member an exceptional asset, the MHA Excellence in Governance Fellowship provides governance leadership opportunities through a powerful combination of expert faculty, specially designed curriculum and interaction.”

Competency Model:

Face-to-face retreat-like modules focus on:

- Principles of Effective Governance
- The Board’s Role in Quality and Patient Safety
- Hospital and Medical Staff Strategic Partnerships

- Personal Mastery and Capacity Building

Number of Graduates:

Roughly 110

Rigor of Certification:

- Limited Class Size.
- Trustees must have at least one year of board experience.
- Four face-to-face modules.
- Virtual discussions before and after sessions.
- Optional bonus learning experiences.
- Selected fellows should plan to invest one day per month throughout the nine-month fellowship.

Financial Details:

\$7,000-\$7,200 per person. Includes all course materials and on-site meeting fees, including the registration fee for the MHA Health Foundation Governance Leadership Forum and the MHA Annual Membership Meeting.

8. Minnesota

Minnesota Hospital Association Board Certification

[View Sources](#)

- Erin Steward, VP MHA Health Foundation

Goals and Motivators:

- “In our era of heightened government scrutiny around board responsibility, hospital governing boards have a profound responsibility to their hospital and community to be knowledgeable and have a full range of skills that will qualify them to make the effective decisions for the future of the organization.”
- “Designed to make a good board trustee great and a committed trustee an exceptional asset. This certification is a process of verifying an individual trustee’s initiatives to improve personal health care knowledge, leadership effectiveness and compliance with a variety of governance best practices.”

Competency Model:

Instructional content on governance topics and issues including:

- 12 education units in principles of effective governance

- 8 education units in strategic planning and positioning
- 4 education units in fiduciary duties
- 4 education units in board development and self-assessment
- 4 education units in quality/patient safety
- 3 education units in general
- Basic standards of board involvement

Number of Graduates:

117 as of July 2015. Participants come from all different types of hospitals, but they tend to get larger numbers from smaller, more rural hospitals.

Rigor of Certification:

- Certification requires participation in any of the following media that provide governance education: web-based training, audio conferencing, video courses, state and national conference and other activities.
- The certification process takes approximately two years involving educational and personal aspects. Trustees must have at least one year of board experience.
- A total of 35 credits (one hour per credit) are needed to complete the certification. A maximum of 20 percent, or 7 credits, of a trustee’s total education credit hours can be earned through outside organizations.
- Also offer “Advanced Certification” which requires an additional 8 credits.

Financial Details:

No cost for the program itself, but participants will pay registration fees for conferences needed to obtain credits.

9. Missouri

Governance Excellence Certificate Program

[View Source 1](#)

[View Source 2](#)

- Beth Morell, VP Communications and Education - MHA

*Technically not trustee certification. “Trustees receive a certificate of completion for participation.” -Beth Morell

Goals and Motivators:

“Health care is in a period of rapid change. At times like these, it is especially important for hospital trustees to understand the issues facing their organizations. The Governance Excellence Certificate Program has been designed specifically for hospital trustees to develop the skills and knowledge that will allow them to make effective decisions for their organizations.”

Competency Model:

In-person face-to-face kickoff meeting and computer-based independent study programs. Topics include:

- The Board’s Fiduciary Responsibility
- Driving Change: Integrating Mission, Values and Vision into Board Leadership
- Governance Accountabilities and Opportunities in the Quest for Quality
- The Board’s Role in Building Constructive Hospital/Medical Staff Relationships
- The Board’s Role in Strategic Planning
- Building Bonds: Pathways to Better Board/CEO Relationships
- Preventing and Curing Governance Diseases: Practical Prescriptions for Improving Governance Health and Wellness
- Transparency in Governance Practice

Number of Graduates:

Unknown

Rigor of Certification:

One-day required kickoff meeting and six independent study programs to be completed within one year.

Financial Details:

\$50 fee covers food and refreshments at kickoff meeting and flash drive with study programs.

10. Nebraska

Trustee Education Certification Program

[View Sources](#)

- Kim Larson, Director of Marketing - NHA

Goals and Motivators:

- “This certification process has been designed for hospital trustees as part of a larger effort to hold Nebraska hospitals to a higher standard of accountability.”

- “The NHAREF has developed this special, voluntary trustee education certification to make a good board member great, and a committed board member an exceptional asset.”

Competency Model:

Topics include:

- Preparation and participation standards for board and committee meetings
- Meeting the fiduciary duties of care, loyalty and obedience, and governance obligations to bylaws, accreditation standards and laws
- Commitment to governance educational development
- Participating in performance evaluation of self, the board and the CEO
- Participating in advocacy efforts on behalf of your hospital and health care in Nebraska

Number of Graduates:

90 Total Trustees from 10 hospitals and health systems participating however not all meet the requirements annually. Makeup: 1 large health system, 1 non-critical access hospital, and 8 small rural critical access hospitals.

Rigor of Certification:

Signed attestation that trustee has completed the program’s required hours of education and complied with standards of certification. Must be completed annually.

- *First year:* 12 hours of approved course work. Eight of these hours may be from a trustee orientation program completed in a previous year.
- *Second year:* 8 hours of continuing board education. Every two years at least 4 of these hours must be at a face-to-face program.
- *Third+ year:* 8 hours of continuing board education but they may count committee time as part of the 8 hours.

Financial Details:

No cost.

11. New Hampshire

Trustee Foundations Governance Education

[View Source 1](#)

[View Source 2](#)

Goals and Motivators:

“This new service was developed in response to member requests for brief governance education programs that may be presented and discussed at board meetings.”

Competency Model:

Programs created by TrusteeFoundations™. GovernanceWORKS™ Governance Essentials Collection™ includes:

- On-demand governance knowledge-building materials, including pre-recorded governance education programs, white papers, and customizable PowerPoints
- A customizable board self-assessment toolkit
- A customizable trustee succession toolkit
- Resources for CEO succession planning
- Customizable sample committee charters
- Customizable policies and procedures
- A customizable board orientation manual
- Benchmark documents allowing hospitals to compare their performance against governance standards and best practices
- Customizable retreat materials
- Sample customizable materials to assist hospitals in exploring opportunities for affiliation and partnerships
- Definitions to hundreds of key health care terms and acronyms, and links to external resources and reports

Number of Graduates:

Unknown

Rigor of Certification:

- No requirements only educational material.
- Hospital purchases a self-running PowerPoint® show with audio, a detailed BoardBrief handout and other supporting materials, and questions for board discussion following the program.
- Hospitals have the option to purchase assessment software.

Financial Details:

Governance Essentials Collection™ can be purchased for a one-time price of \$3,995.

12. New Jersey

NJHA Trustee Institute

[View Source 1](#)

[View Source 2](#)

[View Source 3](#)

Goals and Motivators:

New Jersey passed a hospital trustee education law in May 2007, requiring trustees to take a minimum of seven hours of education designed to, “clarify the roles and duties of a hospital trustee.”

Competency Model:

The trustee training program must address each of the following subjects:

- Ethical and fiduciary responsibilities of a member
- Role of the governing body in improving health care quality
- Hospital financial management
- Hospital organization and governance
- Legal and regulatory compliance issues

Number of Graduates:

All new board members must participate.

Rigor of Certification:

- Minimum of seven hour of trustee education completed in first 6 months of board service.
- Hospital must submit to DHHS a description of the education program 60 before it occurs.
- Can be completed in various ways: online, classroom, seminar, etc.
- Must be provided by approved training providers.
- Training providers are required to issue certificates of completion, which hospitals must maintain.
- NJHA offers resources through its trustee institute and organizes one-day seminars that completely fulfill the requirements.

Financial Details:

- Cost varies depending on method of education chosen.
- NJHA Trustee Institute seminar costs \$495 for members, \$895 for non members.

13. North Carolina

North Carolina Hospital Association Trustee Institute

[View Sources](#)

Goals and Motivators:

“Trustee Institute is a resource to help enable hospital Board members to expand their leadership roles and to learn from acknowledged experts about best practices and successful experience in addressing the current healthcare environment.”

Competency Model:

Key topics include:

- NCHA Orientation for Hospital Trustees
- An Integrated Approach to Advocacy
- Board Responsibility for Compliance
- The Changing Healthcare Landscape
- Understanding Diversity and Disparities

Number of Graduates:

Unknown

Rigor of Certification:

- Education not certification.
- Trustee Institute: three-day conference with educational programming.

Financial Details:

- Trustee Institute: \$499 per trustee registration fee.
- Slideshows: No cost.

14. North Dakota

North Dakota Hospital Association Trustee Institute

[View Source 1](#)

[View Source 2](#)

- Pam Cook, Director of Educational Services - NDHA

Goals and Motivators:

“This new service was developed in response to member requests for brief governance education programs that may be presented and discussed at board meetings.”

Competency Model:

Programs created by TrusteeFoundations™. GovernanceWORKS™ Governance Essentials Collection™ includes:

- On-demand governance knowledge-building materials, including pre-recorded governance education programs, white papers, and customizable PowerPoints
- A customizable board self-assessment toolkit
- A customizable trustee succession toolkit
- Resources for CEO succession planning
- Customizable sample committee charters
- Customizable policies and procedures
- A customizable board orientation manual
- Benchmark documents allowing hospitals to compare their performance against governance standards and best practices
- Customizable retreat materials
- Sample customizable materials to assist hospitals in exploring opportunities for affiliation and partnerships
- Definitions to hundreds of key health care terms and acronyms, and links to external resources and reports

Number of Graduates:

Very low participation per Pam Cook, Director of Educational Services-NDHA

Rigor of Certification:

- No requirements only educational material.
- Hospital purchases a self-running PowerPoint® show with audio, a detailed BoardBrief handout and other supporting materials, and questions for board discussion following the program.

Financial Details:

Governance Essentials Collection™ can be purchased for a one-time price of \$3,995.

15. Tennessee

Tennessee Hospital Association Board Certification Program

[View Sources](#) – Mike Dietrick, VP THA

Goals and Motivators:

- “Enables hospitals to utilize best practices and demonstrate to lawmakers, regulators, physicians, employees, the business community and other community stakeholders that Tennessee hospitals: understand and embrace the need for governance

accountability, govern according to a standard of excellence, and are willing to formally certify their adherence to governance best practices.”

- “The aim of trustee certification is to achieve the highest quality of governance by ensuring ethical, independent and conflict-of-interest free behavior. Top notch leadership and governance foster sustainable employee and community trust.”

Competency Model:

Participating hospitals or systems and board members are encouraged to focus on six specific areas:

- Compliance
- Diversity/Cultural Competency
- Finance
- Governance
- Health Reform
- Quality and Patient Safety

Number of Graduates:

Roughly 110 in 2015. Program has been running for 10 years. Participating hospitals range from small and rural to large and urban.

Rigor of Certification:

- Self attestation of:
 - Completion of five hours of continuing board education.
 - Attendance at 75% or more of regularly scheduled board meetings.
 - Other general tasks and competencies.
- Hospital level: 1 to 3 stars awarded based on percent of board members certified.

Financial Details:

No cost.

16. Texas

Certified Healthcare Trustee Program

[View Sources](#)

Goals and Motivators:

“Certified Healthcare Trustee designation is earned through a voluntary program designed to help healthcare board members become better qualified to make effective and efficient decisions for the future of their health care organizations. In this evolving

industry it is vital for board members to be prepared and excel as leaders in this field.”

Competency Model:

Focused on best practices related to:

- Quality
- Governance
- Finance
- General/Community

Number of Graduates:

102 total graduates.

Rigor of Certification:

- 24 hours of continuing education within three years.
- Must have served as hospital/ health system trustee for at least one year.
- Must pass CHT Knowledge Assessment with a score of 70/100 or higher (given three chances).

Financial Details:

Fee of \$100 for THT members and \$150 for non-members.