WHAT DO BOARDS DO? Well, to put it very simply . . .

- Advisory Boards Give Advice to an agency or project
- Governing Boards govern an organization.

ADVISORY BOARDS
- People with different skills and ideas
- Study the issue at hand
- Collect input from members
- Visit with people in the community
- Make recommendations about issues

GOVERNING BOARDS
- People knowledgeable about the organization
- Have officers - President or Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer
- Have roles and responsibilities defined by governing authority or laws
- Make rules and policies about an agency

BY-LAWS
By-laws are written policies. They describe:

- Purpose
- Terms
- Mission
- Attendance
- Membership
- Officers
- Roles
- Responsibilities

Most committees or boards follow by-laws

A board or committee may have many different types of groups. These can include an ad-hoc committee (temporary); a task force (usually state-wide in scope); a board committee (formal), a holiday committee (usually informal); or a conference committee (either).

EXAMPLES
Many different Boards and committees impact families of children with special health care needs. These are only a few.
- ND FamNet Board
- ND State Council on Developmental Disabilities
- ND Inter-Agency Coordinating Council
- IDEA
- HENDECA
- CSHS Advisory Committee

WHY SERVE ON A BOARD?
- Help yourself and others
- Get information
- Influence others
- Promote change
- Gain experience
- Network

WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER? Deciding to serve on a board or committee involves thinking about your time, interests, support needs and logistics. Questions to ask include: What is the purpose of this board or committee and does that match my interests and needs? What are board members required to do and what is the time commitment? How will I balance my work on the board or committee with childcare, family and work? Are there alternate ways of participating? What are the costs for transportation, dues, or meals? Does the agency provide any support? Am I comfortable in speaking up and asking for what I need?
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Your job is to find out the purpose of the board or committee and meet the expectations for all embers. Many boards or committees will provide you with an orientation or manual to help you function as a board member. Two primary expectations for ALL participants are: 1) Show up for meetings and 2) Respond quickly to phone calls and emails.

During meetings you will be expected to:

- Follow the agenda
- Listen carefully
- Ask for clarification
- Stay on topic
- Speak up at appropriate times
- Share your perspective
- Understand who you represent

To participate, you will need to prepare for the meeting by reading the agenda, past minutes and related reports in advance. Boards and committees try to send this information out a few weeks before the meeting but this does not always happen. Sometimes you may get materials at the last minute. Follow the ground rules set by the board or committees. Groups often use Roberts Rules of Order to communicate in formal groups. You

Positive Communication Positive communication is important in all meetings. Although we all encounter frustrating situations, when serving on a board we want to avoid blaming or accusing others, making negative statements about people and using sarcasm to get our point across. Also we need to avoid using our disability or our child’s disability in a way that makes it seem that we are either a victim or a person who is superior to others because of our unique experiences. All families have challenges although they may not always be visible. and while yours may be unique there is plenty of pain going around. Treat other families and professionals with respect and use people first language and you will earn the respect of others. Finally, consider how to put your ideas across in positive terms. Which phrases seem better?

Helping Phrases

Let’s . . .
What if we ....
You made a great point.
It sounds like we are agreed on ....
It seems like we disagree about ...
Can we . . .
I . . .

Squelching Phrases

That won’t work.
That’s a bad idea ...
I don’t care ...
It doesn’t matter ...
I have more experience than you.
We already tried that ...
I won’t ....

BE AN ACTIVE MEMBER

You can become an active member on the board by learning how to

- Make a motion
- Nominate someone
- Offer to take on a task
- Share an idea
- Volunteer to serve on a committee
- Bring information

Prepare for the meeting by bringing your binder (if you were given one) and keeping it up to date as new handouts are provided. Bring a way to take notes. Ask for information to be shared electronically if you need that format. Ask for a list of the membership with contact information. Come a little early and watch what the other members do. Ask about any reimbursement beforehand complete any necessary forms at the meeting.