



## **CRITERIA FOR COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARDS**

### **Creating a Local Community Advisory Board**

#### **Community Advisory Boards (CABs)**

Community Advisory Boards have become recognized as important sources of input for researchers. The goal of the CAB is to advise the researchers on study design and protocol that involve community participation, i.e., Phase I-III clinical trials.

Community Advisory Boards should consist of a representative sample of the target population from which study participants will be recruited.

Commitment, altruism and a willingness to work constructively toward an agreeable end are more important in selecting CAB members than the individual's level of education or profession.

An effective CAB is one where members engage in discussion, listen, feel free to ask questions, and where researchers are willing to discuss issues openly and solicit input from the CAB. CAB members should be willing to question decisions regarding study design and/or procedures with the understanding that they lack any actual authority to direct decisions or changes in the research protocol. Equally, researchers should be open to receiving questions and concerns from CAB members in a cooperative manner,

#### **Membership**

In seeking to form a Community Advisory Board, first consider the population from which the study sample will be drawn. Is it gay men, women, I.V. drug users, or some mix of different groups? If study enrollment is underway, study participants are a likely group to approach for CAB membership. If the study site is part of a larger organization, other related research trials with CABs may provide additional candidate CAB members. Prominent community members/ opinion leaders would be good candidates for CAB membership and may have suggestions for other candidate members. The point of CAB membership is community representation, therefore it is important that community representation be as diverse as the study population, fairly representing differences on sex, race, age and risk group. In the case of HIV prevention trials, CAB members should consist of the HIV affected population, which would include people at risk for HIV and infected individuals as well.

**Purpose**

The CAB has no real authority on the conduct of the researchers whom they advise, and often questions of a clinical nature are not even brought to the CAB's attention. However, as CAB members become more familiar and knowledgeable about the research, greater participation on technical issues can be expected. The area where CABs have the greatest input tend to be in how to recruit and retain study participants: the amount and type of information, education, and counseling participants should receive, the language and wording of the consent document(s), and issues concerning confidentiality and rights of study participants. These topics are extremely important and their relevance to good study design and execution should be clearly understood by all CAB members including study staff who may sit in on CAB meetings.

The dynamics of the CABs structure -that it is there to advise the researchers- should be made clear from the outset so that all participants understand their relationship to one another. Researchers should keep in mind that the CAB is there to help keep the study honest, ethical, and to safeguard the interests of study participants: such aims should be regarded with the same level of concern as for other clinical criteria and endpoints. As CAB members gain expertise and experience, some may have even greater input by writing concept papers, co-authoring papers or representing the study at conferences. Experienced CAB members may also assist inexperienced research sites in establishing CABS.

**Terms of Membership**

CAB members should agree to certain terms of membership to serve on a CAB; these terms generally have to do with attendance and voting. CAB members are expected to attend meetings regularly and to inform study staff if they know they cannot attend a meeting so that issues requiring a vote can be scheduled accordingly. CAB membership is strictly voluntary, however money for transportation, childcare, and other expenses directly related to CAB membership should be provided when necessary. Study staff should be available to assist the CAB when required and provide the CAB with regular updates and meeting minutes in a timely fashion.