

Texas Visiting Nurse Association Board Member

Overview: Specifically, this involves my service on the volunteer Board of Directors of the Visiting Nurse Association of Texas (“VNA”), a nonprofit, from 1985 through the present. The VNA is the community’s most trusted provider of quality healthcare services in the home and is the oldest, most experienced Hospice Care provider in Texas. VNA offers Meals on Wheels (“MOW”) in Dallas County. VNA also offers VNA Hospice, Palliative Care and Private Care in North Texas and East Texas.

The VNA was established in 1934. The VNA is a nonprofit organization helping our elderly residents, neighbors and loved ones maintain their dignity and independence by providing the services that allow them to age where they are happiest and most comfortable – at home.

Over the years, I have had the honor of serving as VNA’s Board Chair. More recently, I have served as Chair of VNA’s Regulatory Compliance and Audit Committee. This year, 2019, I became an Honorary Life Trustee (non-voting member) of the VNA Board of Directors.

Service on the VNA Board is a prototype example of the issues facing volunteer members of a nonprofit’s board of directors and the questions would-be volunteers should ask. What are the duties of a board member? What is the potential legal exposure of a board member? What development activities (e.g., donations, time) am I expected to contribute?

The VNA is a model of good practices in educating its Board members by holding regular sessions by the VNA in-house General Counsel on Board members’ duties of loyalty, care and obedience.

The VNA also offers protection for its Board of Directors by providing Directors and Officers Liability Insurance coverage. I recommend this type coverage be available in any nonprofit for which service is contemplated.

Also, state law, such as the Texas Charitable Immunity and Liability Act, may serve to protect volunteers from liability exposure to encourage volunteer services through nonprofit organizations. This Act does not shield a nonprofit organization or its employees from liability, but it can significantly reduce their exposure. I would check to see if state law at the volunteer’s location provides similar protection.

Serving on the board of an existing nonprofit or setting up a nonprofit such as VNA (e.g., providing hot meals to the elderly through a service such as MOW) can represent a valuable community service project.

VNA Board members are asked to become familiar with its articles of organization and bylaws. This should be best practices for service on any nonprofit board.

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VNA Board members, all of whom are volunteers, are asked to contribute time, expertise and money as each is able, and to contribute time recruiting other board members and attending meetings as time permits. This also should be best practices for service on any nonprofit board. VNA Board members also commit to (i) making attendance at all four (4) annual board meeting a top priority; (ii) actively participate in a board committee or task force; and (iii) recruit new board members and give advice to the VNA Governance Committee. These type commitments should be best practices for any nonprofit.

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