



# Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs

## Advisory Committee: Public Member and Their Role

*"Must I have a public member on my Advisory Committee? They can't contribute; they don't know anything about education or being a(n) [fill in the profession]."*

I often hear this question as a staff member with two CAAHEP Committees on Accreditation, anesthesiologist assistant and EMS professions.

Yes, you must have a public member on your Advisory Committee. Yes, they can and do contribute. They do not need to know about education or your profession.

The CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* require programs to appoint an Advisory Committee comprised of the program's communities of interest. Communities of interest served by the program include, but are not limited to, students, graduates, faculty members, sponsor administrators, employers, physicians, and the public. Your profession may have additional communities of interest.

The Advisory Committee **advises** the program regarding revisions to curriculum and program goals based on the changing needs and expectations of the program's communities of interest and assesses program effectiveness, including the program's outcomes. (Butterfly: best practice is having a non-program person chair the Advisory Committee because of the Advisory Committee's role to **advise**. Advising one's own group can limit perspective. Plus, what a great way to build engagement with members of the Advisory Committee.)

The purpose of the public member is to provide the perspective and represent the community's interests at large.

What constitutes a public member? Defining a public member is easiest defined with what they are not. A public member

- is not currently or formerly employed as a provider in the profession or healthcare provider;
- is not a member of any trade association or membership organization that is related to the practice;
- does not hold a status named in the *Standards* (e.g., a retired physician, retired employer);
- is not employed by the sponsor of the educational program;
- is not a relative of an individual who is employed by the sponsor of the educational program;
- and
- does not hold any position with a CAAHEP-accredited program.

Where can you find a public member? Here are some ideas:

- Is there a local coffee or sandwich shop your students frequent? Ask the manager or owner to serve on the advisory committee as a public member.
- Is there a consumer of your profession that would be a good advocate? For example, a cardiac arrest survivor cared for by the paramedics, a regular blood donor that interacts with the

specialist in blood banking, or a surgical patient that is tended to by a surgical technologist, anesthesiologist assistant, anesthesia technologist, or perfusionist.

- Connect with the local high school, especially the guidance counselor or a teacher. (Additional benefits: introducing and promoting your profession to high school students.)
- Clergy have strong connections to individuals in the community who may be interested in or know someone.

Thoughtful selection of the Advisory Committee representatives is key to the overall program success and long-range planning. The public member can come from many sources; the important factor is their interest in providing input to the program.

by Jennifer Anderson Warwick, MA  
Co-Chair, CAAHEP Standards Committee  
Executive Director, ARC-AA  
Accreditation Consultant, CoAEMSP