Operating Guidelines of the
National Consumer Advisory Board
and the
NCAB Steering Committee

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Article I

Name
The name of the organization will be the “National Consumer Advisory Board,” also known as NCAB. The small group of leaders guiding the activities of NCAB will be known as the NCAB Steering Committee.

Article II

Definitions
For the purposes of these Operating Rules, the following definitions apply:

- **Consumer**: A homeless or formerly homeless person who is/has received care from an HCH agency.
- **Health Care for the Homeless Agencies (HCH)**: Organizations that provide health care and/or respite care for homeless individuals. These organizations are not required to receive any specific funding stream in order to be considered Health Care for the Homeless Agencies.
- **Homeless Person**: “an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing.” [Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C., 254b)]
- **Local CAB**: Consumer Advisory Boards are organized groups of currently and formerly homeless consumers of HCH programs that are involved in the governance of an HCH.
- **National Conference**: the annual conference organized for grantees of the federal HCH program by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
- **National Health Care for the Homeless Council (referred to as NHCHC or “the Council”)**: a nonprofit membership organization that is the legal body through which NCAB operates.
• **NCAB Steering Committee**: The NCAB Steering Committee operates as a standing committee of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, and all members of NCAB are individual members of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council (see Article IV, Section 1).

• **Voting**: as used in these rules, unless otherwise described, voting refers to participation in the consensus decision-making process employed throughout the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. This process allows for decisions by majority vote when consensus cannot be reached.

## Article III

**Purpose**

The purpose of the National Consumer Advisory Board is to organize the consumers of Health Care for the Homeless services so that they have a voice in national issues involving the health care of homeless persons, to assist the members in becoming more involved in their local Consumer Advisory Boards and to be a clearinghouse of information relating to homeless health care.

## Article IV

**Membership**

**Section 1—Membership requirements:**

Membership is open to anyone who is a member of NHCHC.

*Designated Project voting members must:*

1. Be homeless or formerly homeless; and
2. Have accessed services at a Health Care for the Homeless agency; and
3. Fill out an application for membership online at the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. That application is available on the NHCHC website (nhchc.org).

It is preferable that voting NCAB members are involved in a local CAB and/or organizational governance, but this is not required for participation as a member of NCAB.

All NCAB members are individual members of the National HCH Council and are eligible for election to National Health Care for the Homeless Council board of directors. Only members who meet the qualifications as a voting member will be eligible for officer positions on the NCAB Steering Committee.

There is no requirement that dues be paid by NCAB members or any other individual members of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
Section 2—Voting:
1. Decisions within the National Health Care for the Homeless Council are made by consensus. At meetings where decisions are being made by majority vote (such as election of Regional Representatives), only one NCAB member from each HCH project is eligible to vote.
2. NCAB cannot accommodate proxy voting because the consensus decision-making mechanism requires live conversation and active participation by all parties.
3. For a NCAB Membership Meeting, quorum is defined as the members who are present at a properly-called meeting. For a Steering Committee decision, a quorum is a majority of the members of the Steering Committee.
4. Staff is available for support, but do not participate in the voting process.
5. Decisions made by the Steering Committee will be made by consensus.
6. For officer selection voting procedures, see Article VI, Section 3.

Section 3—Communication:
1. Communication with members will be conducted by e-mail and by posting notices on the website of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. Members are responsible for informing NCAB of changes in contact information.
2. The Secretary will be responsible for assuring that advance notices of meetings are sent out to the membership and will include agendas and relevant materials. The Secretary will work with the staff and Chair to distribute these items in advance of meetings.

Article V

Meetings

Section 1—Full NCAB Meetings
1. An annual membership meeting will take place at the National Health Care for the Homeless Council conference.
2. Notice will be distributed to the membership at least 90 days prior to the conference.

Section 2—Other NCAB Meetings
1. The Steering Committee will meet monthly by conference call, and may meet face-to-face one or more times per year (see Article V, Section 1), as the budget allows.
2. The Chairperson may establish working committees to accomplish the organization's mission. NCAB committees will typically meet by conference call.
3. Each member of the NCAB Steering Committee and Regional Representative is strongly encouraged to participate on committees of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
4. If an NCAB member joins a committee, he or she will be notified by e-mail of the
scheduled meetings.
5. Other meetings may be arranged as needed throughout the year.

Article VI

Officers

Section 1 – Officers
The membership of the Steering Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, two Co-Chairs, a Secretary, and three Members-at-Large who serve as Officers of the National Consumer Advisory Board. The Steering Committee is given authority to make decisions for the benefit of the entire NCAB membership. The Steering Committee may appoint such other officers and agents as it shall deem necessary, and who shall have such authority and exercise such powers and perform such duties as shall be determined by the NCAB Steering Committee.

Section 2 – Terms of Office
Each individual may serve no more than two consecutive terms (or more than five years) in any one Steering Committee position. An individual may serve up to but no more than twelve years consecutively on the Steering Committee. An individual must take a two-year period off between each consecutive 12-year period of service on the NCAB Steering Committee.

Section 3 – Election of Officers
1. Any voting-eligible member of NCAB may run for office (see Article IV, Section 1).
2. Elections will be held every year at the Annual Meeting during the National HCH Conference. Steering Committee member nominees will be presented to the membership by the Nominating Committee to be voted on by consensus. The Regional Representatives shall be elected by majority vote, each HCH project getting only one ballot.
3. The Chairperson will appoint a Nominating Committee to manage the officer election process. The membership will be notified of the positions coming open at least 6 weeks prior to the annual meeting. Members can nominate themselves or someone else, but the candidate must send in a biography for the nomination to be considered by NCAB for election purposes.
4. The Nominating Committee will develop a recommended slate of Steering Committee candidates and will distribute it to the NCAB membership at least one week prior to the Annual Meeting at the National Conference; this distribution will include the biographical statements of each candidate, whether or not chosen for the slate. The slate will be confirmed or altered using consensus by the NCAB membership present at the annual meeting.
5. The Nominating Committee will develop a slate that includes nominees
for the following terms of office (as needed on a rotating basis):
  Chairperson – Two-year term
  Co-Chair – two-year term
  Co-chair – two-year term
  Secretary – two-year term
  Member at Large – one-year term
  Member at Large – two-year term
  Member at Large – two-year term

6. The following terms shall be staggered so that both positions are not elected in the same year: Chairperson and Secretary, the two Co-Chairs, and the two 2-year Member-at-Large positions.

7. The Nominating Committee shall also develop a list of candidates to serve as Regional Representatives. This list is not a recommended slate of candidates, but a set of nominees for election by majority vote at the Annual Meeting. The Nominating Committee will distribute the Regional Representative candidate list, including biographical statements of each Regional Representative candidate, to be mailed along with the slate of recommended Steering Committee candidates, at least one week prior to the annual meeting. In conducting this vote, each HCH Agency shall be allowed one vote only, regardless of how many representatives of an agency are present at the Annual Meeting.

8. The following Regional Representative position terms will be staggered so that all positions are not elected in the same year:
   Regions 3+4, 5+7 and 9+10 are elected in odd numbered years (conference in DC).
   Regions 1+2 and 6+8 are elected in even numbered years.

Section 4 – Duties of Officers

1. The Chairperson will preside at all meetings of NCAB. The Chairperson shall designate such committees and sub-committees as may be necessary to carry out the purposes herein stated and the policies and directives of NCAB, and shall designate the chairperson of each committee and the persons to serve thereon. The Chairperson will prepare the agenda for each meeting. The Chairperson shall serve as a member of the NHCHC board of directors and as a Governing Member of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. The Chairperson shall by virtue of office be a member of all committees except the Nominating Committee.

2. The Co-Chairs shall be authorized to act in place of the Chairperson when so directed by the Chairperson and/or when the Chairperson is absent or disabled. The Co-Chairs shall have such other and further duties as the Chairperson and NCAB shall require. In the absence of the Chairperson or in the event of an inability or refusal to act, the Co-Chair shall perform the duties of Chairperson and, when so acting, shall have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the Chairperson. The Co-Chairs shall perform such other duties and have such other powers as Chairperson and the Steering Committee from time to time prescribe.
3. **The Secretary** shall keep minutes of all NCAB meetings, and shall assure that all members are informed as to the agenda, time and place of each meeting (task is typically completed by staff, but the Secretary will make sure it happens in a timely manner). The Secretary shall have such other duties as are customary for a secretary of a board and as the Chairperson and the NCAB Steering Committee shall require.

4. **Members-at-Large** shall be responsible for:
   - Collecting and reporting consumer involvement on committees to the Steering Committee;
   - Keeping the Steering Committee informed of issues related to committee work;
   - Keeping the Steering Committee informed of feedback from consumer involvement on committees;
   - Keeping the consensus process on-track;
   - Identifying needs of NCAB and reporting those to the Steering Committee and/or staff as appropriate;
   - Facilitating meetings as needed; and
   - Helping Regional Representatives with contacting NCAB members to update information, offer assistance, check-in, follow-up on technical assistance, etc.

5. **Regional Representatives** shall be responsible for:
   - Representing 2 HRSA regions each to the Steering Committee – 1 & 2; 3 & 4; 5 & 7; 6 & 8; 9 & 10.
   - Communicating regularly with CABs and consumers in their respective regions
   - Providing technical support to CABs in their respective regions as requested by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council
   - Attending Regional Trainings and other regional events as requested
   - Participating in leadership development offered by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, as funds allow
   - Being ready and willing to serve on the Steering Committee should a vacancy present itself mid-term
   - Working with other consumer leaders in their regions to ensure continuity of consumer leadership
   - Identifying and engaging consumer leaders to assist in the duties of connecting with local CABs and ensuring consumer participation at regional events
   - Submitting, at a minimum, quarterly reports to the NCAB Steering Committee outlining the following:
     - Which CABs have you been in contact with? What was the nature of the contact? Were any technical assistance requests referred to the National HCH Council? Have you provided technical assistance and reported on your experience to the Council?
     - What events have you helped to plan in your area with the goal of increasing consumer involvement in community decision-making?
Examples include Homeless Persons Memorial Day, HCH Day, voter registration drive, and other CAB-led projects

- Communicating with NCAB’s Steering Committee as much as possible and reporting any regional news to the Steering Committee for possible national publication.
- NOTE: Eligibility for conference travel subsidies will be contingent on satisfactory progress in meeting the goals and communicating regularly with local CABs and the NCAB Steering Committee, and on the availability of funds.

6. **Immediate Past Chair** of NCAB may participate in an advisory and support role for one additional year after their last term is complete. The purpose of this role is to ensure that the incoming Chair has the support and guidance they need to transition to their new role effectively. The Immediate Past Chair will not participate in voting or be able to block consensus during Steering Committee meetings. They will work with the current Chair to develop the call agendas with the current Chair taking the lead. The Immediate Past Chair will also create an agenda for their time working together to get the current Chair up-to-speed on all of the activities that the Chair works on throughout the year.

**Section 5 – Decision-Making Provisions**

NCAB and its Steering Committee will make decisions by consensus except for the elections of Regional Representatives, which will be done by majority vote at the Annual Meeting. (See addendum on the consensus process, attached.)

**Section 6 – Participation Expectations**

NCAB Steering Committee members are expected to participate in a minimum of 75% of the Steering Committee’s monthly calls annually. Both the National Conference and Governing Membership are required in-person meetings. The year starts on July 1 and runs through June 30, in conjunction with the fiscal year followed by NHCHC.

NCAB Regional Representatives are expected to participate in a minimum of 50% of the Steering Committee’s monthly calls annually. While the Steering Committee is sympathetic to barriers to involvement, there will be no exceptions to this attendance rule and those who fail to meet it will be asked to step down.

All NCAB Steering Committee members and Regional Reps will be expected to notify the group of a planned absence and to find out and complete assigned tasks in a timely manner.

All NCAB Steering Committee members and Regional Representatives will be expected to respond to requests for reviewing, editing, commenting, or otherwise making sure the Council and other entities accurately represent the wishes of NCAB. Steering Committee members and Regional Representatives are expected to respond to 75% of the customary and reasonable requests per year, or they risk
being asked to step down from their leadership role. Such tasks include, but are not limited to: review of Consumer Participation Outreach protocol, review of research paper drafted to communicate the results of Consumer Participation Outreach, review of special projects initiated by NCAB such as consumer-focused policy documents, review and comment on NCAB Operating Guidelines and CAB Manual updates, review monthly conference call materials prior to calls, comment on meeting minutes, contribute to the NCAB section of the Quarterly Newsletter, provide information on local events such as Homeless Persons Memorial Day and HCH Day for distribution, planning, and other such activities as may continue to further the mission of NCAB.

Section 7 – Removal of Officers and Regional Representatives

The Steering Committee reserves the right to remove officers or regional representatives for non-participation. If consensus is not possible, removal requires a vote of five of the seven Steering Committee members. The vacated position is replaced by consensus of the Steering Committee and confirmed by the membership at the subsequent Annual Meeting during the National Conference.

ARTICLE VII

Committees

Section 1 – Committee Appointments

NCAB members may at any time establish one or more committees of members for purposes that advise and inform the direction of NCAB, and dissolve any such committees at any time.; this is in addition to the Chairperson’s authority to establish committees. The Chairperson shall appoint the members of committees and designate chairpersons who shall preside at all meetings of the committee and generally supervise the conduct of the committee’s affairs. Standing committees shall consist of no less than three (3) members. Minutes will be kept on all committee meetings.

Section 2 - Committees, Composition and Description of Duties

There shall be one standing committee, the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall consist of the NCAB Officers, and is empowered to act for NCAB.

Other Ad-Hoc committees that convene at various times throughout the year include but are not limited to:

- Nominating Committee – selected by the Steering Committee Chair to review NCAB nominations for Steering Committee and Regional Representative positions and input from NCAB membership subsequent to their posting. They will prepare the slate for review by membership present at the Annual Meeting.
- Ellen Dailey Consumer Advocate Award Committee – selected from among previous Ellen Dailey Award winners to review nominations for this award and
select (by consensus) the person or persons to be honored at the next National Conference with this award.

Any member of NCAB may suggest additional committees to the NCAB Steering Committee or National Health Care for the Homeless Council staff that are needed to facilitate involvement of the larger membership, improve the experience of consumers in leadership around the country, and otherwise further the mission of NCAB.

Section 3 – Duties and Powers of the Steering Committee
The Steering Committee shall be responsible for the control and management of the affairs and interests of NCAB; for keeping NHCHC informed of all activities of NCAB; for complying with all reporting requirements of HRSA and NHCHC; for guiding NCAB so that the various provisions of these Operating Guidelines, including the purposes for which NCAB was organized, set forth herein, are complied with; and for making recommendations and suggesting programs. The Steering Committee shall select one NCAB member to serve with the NCAB Chairperson on the Governing Membership of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.

Section 4 – Notice and Special Meetings
Notice of any meetings of the NCAB Steering Committee shall be given at least five days in advance, delivered personally or by mail, email, phone, fax or nationally recognized overnight courier to each member at his/her address as it appears in the records of NCAB and NHCHC. If mailed, such notice shall be deemed to be delivered when deposited in the United States mail in a sealed envelope, so addressed with postage thereon prepaid. Actions taken in improperly called meetings may be challenged by any member of the Steering Committee by requesting that the Chair call a special meeting to reconsider the action. If the Chair does not act to call a special meeting, any four Steering Committee members may jointly call a special meeting. In any special meeting, the meeting notice shall be provided in accordance with the usual provisions of these Operating Guidelines, and shall include a statement of the proposal to be considered in the special meeting. No other business than that stated in the meeting notice shall be conducted at a special meeting.

Section 5 – Vacancies
Any vacancy occurring in the Steering Committee shall be filled, for the unexpired portion of the term, by a majority vote of the remaining Steering Committee members. In this circumstance, the Steering Committee may elect any member of NCAB, without a formal nominating process.
Section 7 – Absence from Meetings

Any member of the Steering Committee who shall be absent from three consecutive meetings without adequate excuse acceptable to the Steering Committee shall be deemed to have resigned from the NCAB Steering Committee.

Article VIII

Special Provisions

Section 1 – Payment

Individuals shall receive no payment for their service as officers or members of NCAB.

Section 2 – Operating Guidelines

1. These Operating Guidelines will not take effect unless ratified by a consensus of those present at the NCAB business meeting during the National HCH Conference subsequent to the most recent revision date.
2. Amendments to the Operating Guidelines.
   a) An Operating Guidelines committee will convene to review the Operating Guidelines and recommend changes to be voted on by NCAB membership each year prior to the NHCHC conference
   b) The committee will share recommended changes with the Steering Committee prior to distributing them to NCAB membership ahead of the membership meeting at the NHCHC conference
   c) Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing, by email, to each member at least 7 days in advance of the meeting upon which such amendment is to be voted upon
   d) These Operating Guidelines may be amended at any Membership meeting of NCAB by a consensus of the members of NCAB.
   e).

Article IX

Relationship with the National Health Care for the Homeless Council

1. NCAB is an autonomous committee of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
2. The Chairperson or designee represents NCAB on the Board of Directors of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.
3. The Chairperson and one other NCAB member represent NCAB on the Governing Membership of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. NCAB Members are eligible to participate on other committees of the National Council.
4. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council provides staff support to NCAB as needed and as budget allows.
Addendum

USING CONSENSUS

What Exactly Is Consensus?
Consensus is a decision making process which equalizes power over a group of people. Instead of simply voting for an item, and having the majority of the group get their way, the group has to sit down and get a solution to a problem that EVERYONE is ok with. People take different ideas and we see how we feel about them. The solution that the group thinks is the most positive gets chosen, unless a member of the group finds the solution totally unacceptable. Consensus is based on compromise, and the ability to find common ground.

Consensus is a decision making process that works creatively to include all persons making the decision. It is the most powerful decision process as all members agree to the final decision. This is truly radical democracy as all participants have a direct voice and veto power.

How it works

1. **Presentation**
   The proposal is presented as clearly as possibly by its author.

2. **Clarifying Questions**
   Questions are asked by anyone about the proposal to make sure that everyone understands it before you discuss it.

3. **Discussion**
   The proposal is discussed and debated. Possible amendments to the proposal are made at this time. The author(s) always reserves the right to alter the proposal as s(t)he(y) see fit. (If it is only a caucus, this is the last step.)

4. **Take general feelings on the proposal**
   These can be registered through a straw poll, by a round robin or once-round all members, or through some signal such as thumbs up/middle/down. This can be used to modify the original proposal, consider going forth with a vote, or scrapping it altogether.

5. **Call for Major Objection or Strong Concern**
   A single **Major Objection** blocks the proposal from passing. If you have a major objection it means that you cannot live with the proposal if it passes. A major objection isn't an "I don't really like it" or an "I liked the other idea better." It is an "I cannot live with this proposal if it passes, and here's why ... !" A thumbs down in general feelings doesn't mean that it is a major objection, a proposal can still pass if there is a thumbs down with no major objections. Further discussion and amendment may follow the pronouncement of a Major Objection but if the
Objection remains after all discussion is exhausted then the proposal is blocked from going forward.

A Strong Concern does not block the passing of a proposal, but it is a public statement of why you dislike it (so you can say 'I told you so!' later..). All strong concerns are written in the minutes of the meeting or otherwise recorded by the group note-taker.