



BOARD OF DIRECTORS DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

Why does True Colors have (volunteer) board members?

The board of directors of a tax-exempt charity like True Colors is essentially a legal necessity. Our job is to represent the community by overseeing the use of its assets, which have been legally set aside for charitable use. We make sure that True Colors continues to fulfill its mission, that it is being managed effectively, and that it has the resources it needs to function properly. This also involves promoting True Colors.

There are three primary categories of board involvement: governance, fiduciary oversight, and development. Every decision that a Director makes must be made based on the best interests of True Colors, and should not be compromised by personal interests. Board members have an obligation (a “duty of care”) to devote the same attention to their duties that an ordinary prudent person would give. Legally speaking, they must act in good faith, with reasonable care, and in what they think are the best interests of True Colors.

Board members have to be attentive, but we aren’t expected to know everything; we can rely on information from officers, employees, committees, or outside experts as long as we have reason to believe that the person we’re relying on is competent and accurately informed. Though we act on behalf of True Colors, we rarely act alone. The Board works as a collective body, and its decisions have to be approved or authorized by a group vote, or by a vote of the committee to which a particular decision has been delegated by the bylaws.

What are the basic responsibilities of a board member?

GOVERNANCE:

- Prepare for and attend regular (bimonthly) and special board meetings, in person or via conference call (if necessary), along with committee meetings (usually bimonthly)
- Vote on business transactions, bylaws changes, policy decisions, committee recommendations, new members, etc.
- Evaluate performance of Executive Director and make sure succession plan is in place
- Ensure True Colors acts legally and ethically at all times, including transparent decision-making
- Lead and/or join at least one committee made up of board members, staff and community volunteers (e.g., Finance, Governance/Nominations, Marketing, Strategic Planning Committees)
- Act as an officer on Executive Committee (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer)

FIDUCIARY OVERSIGHT:

- Know how to interpret financial statements and keep up to date on financial information
- Vote on budget, financial expenditures, investments, monthly financial reports, and yearly audit
- Work to raise funds from external sources, participate in fund development activities, and make a “meaningful personal financial contribution”
- Identify and connect with potential True Colors partners and funders
- Capitalize fundraising and development programs (as opposed to reliance on donations/grants)
- Make sure organization’s funds are spent carefully and invested safely

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Participate in periodic mission review and longer-range strategic planning for organization
- Talk about True Colors with your friends and colleagues, and in the community
- Maintain and improve the True Colors organizational brand
- Bring your skill set to True Colors, collaborate with other “doers,” and make a unique contribution!



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES

What committees can I volunteer for, and what do they do?

Marketing: Members of this committee work on True Colors' major fundraising events, new fundraising ideas, and some of our media and communications strategies. This is probably our busiest overall committee.

Social Media: This board/staff committee works on True Colors' social media presence and messaging.

Strategic Planning: This committee evaluates TC's conformity with the 2009-2014 strategic plan.

Governance and Nominations: This committee develops organizational policies/bylaws, succession planning strategies, and initiates/supervises the recruitment of new board and committee members.

Finance: This committee supervises True Colors' compliance with sound financial management principles.

True Colors' official organizational mission:

True Colors works to create a world where youth, adults, and families of all sexual orientations and gender identities are valued and affirmed. We challenge all forms of oppression through education, training, advocacy, youth leadership development, mentoring, and direct services to youth and those responsible for their well-being.

Our core values (as restated in the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan):

Safety: *Our work impacts systems including education, neighborhood, home, state custody, employment and others, to ensure that youth are as safe as possible in all places of their lives.*

Inclusion – *we work to be sure that youth feel affirmed in their identities; we work against oppression with a positive spirit of inclusion and celebration.*

Respect – *We value partnership and collaboration as a best practice with individuals, groups, and public and private agencies, respecting the role that diversity plays in strengthening relationships and recognizing the dignity of all persons across ethnic, racial, religious, gender, sexual orientation and other categories.*

Empowerment – *We provide advocacy, support and resources to empower sexual minority youth as they discover, explore and develop their identities and transition to adult life.*

Our core purpose (as restated in the Strategic Plan):

To create a world where youth of all orientations and genders are safe to be free and celebrated within all communities.

Our website (contains lots of information about current programs/activities): www.ourtruecolors.org

Overview of our 2009-14 Strategic Plan (approved by the Board of Directors on March 23, 2010)

Note: full plan contains details and specific benchmarks, e.g., “implement a board assessment and evaluation plan.”

Goal #1: Leadership: Create and implement a Board Governance Structure and Leadership Succession Plan

- *Embrace the Board’s ownership and governance of the organization, and develop and initiate a leadership succession plan for the Executive Director and Board of Directors*
- *Create and implement an Executive Director evaluation with objectives*
- *Build an effective and consistent Board of Directors to fully meet new board member roles and responsibilities*
- *Ensure adequate resources for appropriate staffing to implement the strategic plan*

Goal #2: Funding: Create and implement a sustainable funding and development strategy

- *Develop and implement a plan to diversify and stabilize the funding base*
- *Increase private sources of support funding True Colors’ work*

Goal #3: Marketing: Increase the consistency and effectiveness of the True Colors Brand and Communications

- *Create a consistent communications strategy for marketing of True Colors as an organization, including events and programs*
- *By 2013, develop a formal communication plan to improve, employ and enforce mechanisms to protect youth and ensure that they know their rights and are accountable*
- *Preserve and share True Colors’ history*

Goal #4: Program: Prioritize and engage fully in work that advances and uses essential direct service programs to advance systems that impact children and families

- *Increase change in systems impacting youth and families by increasing and improving collaborative relationships*
- *By end of 2011, develop a structure of services to implement in the successive years of the plan through the annual planning/budget process*
- *Improve ability of True Colors to identify and track LGBT youth service needs and service gaps*
- *Continue the evolution of the mentoring program, re-defining its scope and methods to work toward “best practices” in policies, programming, mentor support, and outcomes*
- *Expand Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and include middle schools in the expansion, while identifying additional services that could improve social, recreational, and leadership development resources*
- *Create a clearly-defined advocacy strategy to ensure change in systems impacting youth and families*

Goal #5: Volunteerism: Develop and implement a fully integrated volunteer program to meet the human resources needs of True Colors

- *Expand and professionalize the current structure of defined volunteer opportunities to include all aspects of True Colors work – program, fundraising, ambassador*
- *Develop a volunteer staff recruitment, training and retention action plan implemented by volunteers and overseen by paid staff*
- *Increase the number and diversity of the pool of trainers providing training as agents of True Colors*
- *Create a structure of programs and events to recognize and celebrate the members and volunteers of True Colors*

Executive Director's Report Year End, 2010

Goal #1: Leadership: Create and implement a Board Governance Structure and Leadership Succession Plan

- Provided job descriptions and other information to committee working on this process. Began and have nearly completed an internal process asking staff to identify situations that required my input as part of a strategy to determine which parts of my job are process mapped already and which are not.

Goal #2: Funding: Create and implement a sustainable funding and development strategy

- Completed development of the donor database
- Developed an individual donor strategy/plan and the creation of a TC top 100 program for 2011 implementation
- Developed and mailed customized letters for donors who already gave in 2010, 2009 donors who have not yet given, and previous donors who did not give in 2009. Resulting in \$11,925 in 2010. This is lower than our 2009 appeal by about \$3,000 (economy?), but did result in the return of several past donors
- Successfully wrote and received \$116,000 in grants in addition to the DCF awards for a total of \$261,029

Goal #3: Marketing: Increase the consistency and effectiveness of the True Colors Brand and Communications

- Continued updating the Website.
- Working on an internal event marketing process (how to get the word out) plan.
- Articles in which staff were quoted or True Colors was highlighted:
 - Metroline (March/April); CNN national news (June) and again in September; Various Fox 61 reports for DADT, Spirit Day; (Details magazine (September); Mother Jones (Nov/Dec 2010); Hartford Courant (Sunday, October 17th), Truth Wins Out (October 19th); ColorLines: News for Action (October 18th)

Goal #4: Program: Prioritize and engage fully in work that advances and uses essential direct service programs to advance systems that impact children and families.

- Completed comprehensive mentoring program evaluation. Provided results to mentors, mentees, social workers and other stakeholders.
- Met all contractual obligations for funders.
- Participated in the following coalitions: Youth Homelessness Prevention; Youth Suicide Prevention Team; Intimate Partner Violence prevention; EqualityCT; SAFE Schools Program, School Climate coalition, Governor's Prevention Partnership coalition.
- Was awarded the CSSD training contract for training of court support services personnel and an on-going training for Student Resource Officers (to be held twice annually).
- Conducted approximately 60 professional training sessions with approximately 1,500 adult participants; and approximately 36 workshops for 900 youth.

Goal #5: Volunteerism: Develop and implement a fully integrated volunteer program to meet the human resources needs of True Colors.

- Updated letters, applications and process. Still need to outreach for a regular volunteer coordinator (seeking a volunteer for this position).

A brief overview of True Colors history:

1992 – Robin McHaelen, Founder and Executive Director was studying for her Master's degree in Social Work at the UCONN School of Social Work.

She began organizing the first "Children From the Shadows" (CFS) conference - Children From the Shadows: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth At Risk. The University of Connecticut, School of Social Work approved the idea of creating a conference about LGBT youth and the risks associated with sexual minority status. After meeting with representatives from various grassroots and mainstream organizations, one of the first agencies to come on board as a supporter was the Connecticut State Department of Children and Families. The Department of Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services soon followed. Both Connecticut Teachers Unions came on board, as did more than 30 grassroots community organizations.

1994 - That first conference, held in March 1994, attracted 160 teachers, social service and mental health care providers, and 90 LGBT youth.

1996 - The Conference was expanded to two (2) days to accommodate the more than 600 participants.

1997 - Connecticut becomes only the 4th state in the country to protect LGBT youth from harassment. True Colors was awarded a grant through the Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective for the creation and administration of Connecticut's first Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services Bureau. For the first time in the organization's history, we were able to fund a part-time Executive Director position and to expand our scope to include LGBT adults and families.

1998 - Children From the Shadows changed its name to True Colors Inc., Sexual Minority Youth and Family Service of CT, and expanded its focus to include LGBT families. The mission was also expanded: "To improve and enrich the lives of sexual minority people through support, education and advocacy in each of the systems necessary to their development as full and productive members of society is fulfilled, and people are judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin, the gender of their life partners or their gender presentation. True Colors, Inc. was officially incorporated in 1998.

True Colors also became the largest LGBT youth issues conference in the country with more than 1,000 participants, and we moved to a bigger venue (the University of Hartford).

1999 – True Colors acquires federal tax-exempt status under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

2001 - True Colors strengthens its existing alliance with the State Department of Children and Families and created the Safe Harbors Project designed to identify and resolve gaps in services for LGBT youth in Child Welfare. The project now includes training, foster parent recruitment, a state-wide task force, and with start-up funding provided by the Connecticut Health Foundation, Connecticut's first LGBT mentoring program.

2005 – True Colors launches CT's first LGBT youth mentoring program. Serving around 100 youth annually, this program is now the second largest teen mentoring program in CT and one of only two such programs in the country.

2009 – True Colors Board of Directors creates and launches its first comprehensive 5 year strategic plan

Today - True Colors stands for full equality for LGBT youth, adults and families. We actively support same-sex marriage equity. We are committed to the work of social justice as an anti-racist organization. And with youth in the lead, we are moving into our next decade with a continued passion to ensure that LGBT people are welcomed, valued and affirmed as full and productive members of society.