

Dignity Health | Frequently Asked Questions

Why has Catholic Healthcare West changed its governance structure and name?

We have taken these steps for two reasons: first, to more clearly describe who we are, and second, to position ourselves for growth in a changing health care environment. The organization's long-term strategic plan calls for more integrated care to enhance quality and reduce costs. Growth plans anticipate expanded and more integrated partnerships; the new structure and name enable us to grow into a national system, welcoming both Catholic and non-Catholic care centers into the system, while respecting the identity and integrity of each.

Why was it necessary to change the structure?

Many Catholic health systems across the country have been moving to new governance models as the demographics of the sisters change. In most cases, Catholic systems are moving to a Public Juridic Person model, which permits lay people to participate in the governance of Catholic organizations. That model, however, requires all the organization's care centers to follow the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs)*. One-third of our facilities are non-Catholic and so follow our *Statement of Common Values* rather than the ERDs. Because inclusiveness has always been a priority for our sister sponsors, and because they want to ensure that we continue to partner with others who share our values, they chose this model of governance, which preserves our ministry in the Catholic tradition.

What is the new name and why was it selected?

Our new name is Dignity Health. We chose this name because the value of dignity is woven into the fabric of our culture. Our mission, vision, and values were all formed out of the recognition of the inherent dignity of each person. It also represents our commitment to delivering excellent medical care to all, to advocating on behalf of the poor, and to partnering with others to improve the quality of life.

What was the original governance structure?

Under the original structure, the top level of governance was a body known as the Corporate Members, which comprised representatives from each of our six sponsoring congregations and which had oversight of the operations of the organization. The Board of Directors was the second level of governance, appointed by the Corporate Members.

What is your new governance structure?

Under the new structure, Dignity Health is a not-for-profit organization, rooted in the Catholic tradition, but is not an official ministry of the Roman Catholic Church. The Board of Directors is the top level of governance, and a Sponsorship Council, comprising representatives from each of the six sponsoring congregations, has direct sponsorship responsibilities for the Catholic hospitals and care centers in our system.

Why did you make these changes now?

We are doing this now to ensure that we are positioned for growth and success in a changing health care environment. Our future will be defined, to a great degree, by our ability to partner with other organizations. The governance changes will enable us to grow into a national system, while ensuring that we continue to respect the identity and integrity of both our Catholic and non-Catholic care centers.

How do these changes help you grow?

The manner in which health care is delivered and organized in the United States is changing. Our long term strategy contemplates national growth and better integration and coordination of care. The new structure and name better position us to grow by giving potential partners the confidence that our Catholic care centers will adhere to ERDs and our non-Catholic care centers will adhere to the Statement of Common Values.

Can you talk more about growth through partnerships? Are there plans for acquisitions or mergers?

Like many health care organizations nationwide, we are talking to a number of potential partners. We cannot comment further about these discussions at this time.

Have the mission, vision, or values changed?

No. These are the core of who we are and will remain so.

Is Dignity Health a Catholic organization?

Dignity Health is a not-for-profit organization, rooted in the Catholic tradition and heritage, but is not an official ministry of the Roman Catholic Church.

Is Dignity Health a faith-based system?

Yes. We are an organization with a Catholic history rooted in the Catholic tradition. The mission and values we hold in common across our facilities continue to reflect that foundation.

Did you need permission from Rome to do this?

The change in governance structure involved a modification to our bylaws. This process was led by our sister sponsors and established by our Board of Directors. The organization's Catholic hospitals will remain Catholic. No permissions were necessary from Rome.

What role did the sisters have in this?

Sisters representing each of our sponsoring congregations initiated and led this process. The system's Catholic hospitals will remain under the direct sponsorship of their founding congregations, and members of our sponsoring congregations will continue to serve on the organization's Board of Directors.

What role did the bishops have?

Archbishop George Niederauer of San Francisco, where Dignity Health is headquartered, consulted with other bishops, and after careful review he determined that these changes were consistent with Catholic moral and doctrinal teachings and they could proceed.

Are the Catholic hospitals still Catholic? Are the non-Catholic hospitals still non-Catholic?

Yes. All of our Catholic hospitals, as well as those that may join the system at a later date, will continue to be Catholic and abide by the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs). Likewise, our non-Catholic facilities, as well as those that may join the system at a later date, will remain non-Catholic and abide by the Statement of Common Values.

Will any of your hospitals now be allowed to perform direct abortions or in vitro fertilization?

No, the policies and procedures at each of our hospitals will remain the same.

Will your Catholic hospitals now be allowed to perform sterilization procedures?

There has been no change in policy at our Catholic hospitals regarding sterilization.