

**Communication Policy – Approved at the August 12, 2008, NHRS Board meeting.**

The NHRS Board recognizes that potential problems can be avoided by having a clear policy that addresses both internal and external communications. It is also important that the roles and responsibilities of the Board and staff are outlined to facilitate effective communication between and among the Trustees, staff, members, employers, and other interested parties.

**Among Trustees**

Because NHRS is an independent agency of the State, Trustees must act in accordance with the Open Meetings Law of the State when discussing NHRS business. The law states that when a quorum of Trustees meet and discuss NHRS business the meeting must comply with the public meeting laws.

Discussion of NHRS business between Trustees by electronic mail is subject to the requirements of being open to the public.

NHRS Trustees are to contact the Board Chair or the Executive Director if they wish to have specific issues discussed by the Board so that these items can be added to the Board meeting agendas.

Informal and purely social gatherings of Trustees where NHRS business is not discussed are not prohibited by the State Open Meetings Law or this policy.

**Between the Board Officers and other Trustees**

Any Trustee may contact the Chair, or in his or her absence, the Vice-Chair, regarding issues of interest or concern about NHRS.

**Between the Executive Director and the Board**

Information for monthly Board meetings will be sent to all Trustees 5-7 days before the meetings through regular mail and/or email. The Executive Director has the responsibility to communicate with the Board Chair between meetings if and when issues arise that require their immediate attention.

**Between the Board and the Staff**

Open communication exists between the Board and staff. If a Trustee needs information or assistance, their primary contact is the Executive Director. Alternatively, they may contact other members of the management team directly if the Executive Director is not readily available. Trustees may also contact the Board's executive assistant directly regarding meeting schedules, travel arrangements, reimbursements, mail, and other administrative matters. The

Chief Legal Officer can give more specific advice on confidentiality of Board/CLO discussions or legal advice as needed.

**Between NHRS and the Media**

The primary media contact for NHRS is the Executive Director or his or her designee.

**Between NHRS and the Membership**

Information to members regarding the plan or their particular benefits is best communicated by the appropriate NHRS staff with knowledge and expertise. Trustees are not expected nor encouraged to counsel members, retirees, or beneficiaries about their eligibility or benefits. Trustees should encourage the member to speak directly to the appropriate staff member who has the best information available. This also allows the System to treat each member fairly and consistently, which is part of the Board's fiduciary duty.

Discussions of a particular member's situation outside of a Board meeting can lead to the disqualification of a Trustee should that member make an application for a benefit which requires approval of the Board. Trustees must make decisions based on evidence and testimony presented only at the Board meeting and not on other factors of which a Trustee may be aware.