



OVERVIEW OF THE FOUNDATION

The Ohio Medical Quality Foundation (OMQF) originated in legislation passed by the Ohio General Assembly, and was created as a supporting foundation of the Ohio Department of Health. The Foundation's Board of Trustees has contracted with The Columbus Foundation since 1995 for staff services and assistance in all areas of OMQF's endeavors, ranging from strategic planning to grant and investment administration.

Since the Foundation began making grants in 1996, its primary grant recipient has been the Ohio Physicians Effectiveness Program (OPEP), now called the Ohio Physicians Health Program (OPHP). The synopsis below summarizes OMQF's history and the long-standing relationship between the Foundation and OPHP.

In response to mid-1970s medical malpractice insurance crisis, the Ohio General Assembly created the Joint Underwriting Association (JUA) and the Stabilization Reserve Fund (SRF) in 1975. The JUA was empowered to issue medical malpractice insurance policies to any licensed physician or hospital in Ohio. The SRF was created to provide a reserve against severe underwriting losses of JUA—essentially, to reimburse JUA should premiums collected not be sufficient to pay claims made against JUA policyholders. Funding for SRF was secured through an assessment on all medical malpractice insurance policyholders in Ohio, whether they were insured through JUA or a private carrier. These annual contributions were paid to SRF and were held in trust and invested under the direction of the SRF board of directors. If not needed, the funds were to be returned to the contributors.

In the period that JUA and SRF were active, no claims were made against SRF. Accordingly, SRF ceased to operate in 1979. The sum of \$10,000,000 was retained in case of potential reinsurance claims, and the rest of the money was returned to the Ohio physicians and hospitals who had paid into SRF. In total, approximately \$25.5 million was returned.

No action was taken regarding the funds remaining in the SRF until 1991, when the Ohio General Assembly eliminated SRF with the intent of refunding the money to contributing hospitals and physicians. However, it was anticipated that SRF would be unable to refund all of the contributions. In order to put these unclaimed funds to work, the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA), and the Ohio Hospital Association (OHA) endorsed transferring any unclaimed funds to a charitable foundation that would benefit hospitals, physicians, and the communities they served. Part of the Assembly's "Refund Legislation," therefore, created OMQF.

The creating statute empowered the Board of Trustees to organize it as an Ohio nonprofit corporation that could be recognized as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization under federal law.

The 13 members of the Board of Trustees include the Director of the Ohio Department of Health and 12 Trustees selected by the Governor. The Governor's appointees are drawn from a variety of medical disciplines, but must include five medical doctors, four hospital representatives, two doctors of osteopathic medicine, and a doctor of podiatric medicine. The Trustees are volunteers who are neither compensated for their service nor reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of OMQF.

The statute that created OMQF also defined the Foundation's goal: to fund activities to improve the quality of medical care rendered to the public. In pursuit of this goal, OMQF was given broad authority to invest in a range of programs, including programs approved under criteria established by the Ohio State Medical Board for treatment of impaired practitioners, programs designed to improve the quality of graduate medical education, programs designed to improve risk management and quality assurance in hospitals and outpatient settings, and other programs, meetings, and educational seminars designed to improve the quality of medical care in Ohio.

OMQF's Trustees gathered for their first official meeting in 1995. In 1996, they adopted a formal Purpose Statement, an excerpt from the Foundation's Code of Regulations that echoes the language of the creating statute. They also adopted guidelines for the review and approval of grants to ensure that proposals for the Board's consideration were consistent with the Purpose Statement. These guidelines were revisited and updated in 2004.

Although OPEP was not specifically mentioned in the creating statute, the intent of OSMA, OOA, and OHA was for OMQF to be the primary funding source for OPEP, with grants to other programs or initiatives taking a secondary role if excess funds were available. In keeping with the intent of the statewide organizations, the primary recipient of OMQF's grants has been OPEP, now called OPHP. This organization is a confidential resource that assists with identification, intervention, referral, monitoring, and recovery documentation of physicians and other healthcare professionals who may be affected by substance use disorders or other issues impacting their health and well-being. OPHP provides recovery documentation, education, support, and advocacy; from evaluation, through treatment and recovery. OMQF has provided consistent support for OPHP since its first grant in 1996. This support, together with Trustees' recommendations and funding for improvements, has been crucial for OPHP's development into a more effective and more sustainable organization.

Other recipients of grants from OMQF include Ohio University, for a study exploring and evaluating e-prescribing, and the Research & Educational Foundation of the Ohio Hospital Association, for the Ohio Patient Safety Institute and Patient Safety Discussion Forum.