

Are You Prepared to Recruit?

Start with recruitment basics to retain your providers

Recruitment and retention can be difficult jobs, but they don't have to be. There are steps that can be taken to make the path a little smoother. It takes thoughtfulness and up-front preparation but, in the end, when you have a long-term provider, the work pays off.

Your first step is to really know your organization. You should be able to discuss such questions as:

- What is your organization's culture?
- What ethical standards are in place in your practice? (Make sure you have these!)
- What are your expectations of the practitioner, of their conduct, productivity, as well as their involvement in the community, or local activities?
- How is call shared? Have a sample schedule available.
- What is the expected turn-around time for responding to patient queries? Whose responsibility is it to respond, i.e. provider, nurse, other support staff?
- What are the expectations for interpersonal relations among practitioners and support staff?
- What is required of practitioners in terms of documentation and billing?

You will need answers to these questions before you can accurately identify and hire someone who will 'fit' into your organization.

Before you begin recruiting, anticipate finding the perfect candidate and be prepared to offer that person a contract. Being prepared to offer a contract means you have determined how the provider will be supported, i.e. is this provider going to be a hospital employee, an employee of a practice, an employee of a partnership, a partner, an independent member of a group? Preparedness also means all specific details have been worked out. The draft contract could be the document used as an outline for discussion during the telephone interview and site visit. A draft contract, which details the employment arrangement and all expectations for the practitioner, as well as a benefit plan, should be ready to share with the candidate before they leave your site. Negotiable areas of the contract should be identified in writing.

However, before inviting a candidate to visit your site, be sure you have taken the time to do a preliminary background check. Do a 'Google' search; ask the candidate if they are an excluded Medicare provider; check board certifications; check the National Practitioner databank; and check for disciplinary actions at the Federation of State Medical Boards web site, www.docinfo.org. If the candidate

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Dear "Aunt Jo"

Your recruitment questions answered



Dear Aunt Jo:

I am a candidate and was recently in the midst of coordinating a site visit, when the site notified me they had offered the contract to another

candidate. This made me really upset! I felt the whole recruitment process had been a waste of my time and energy. I let them know what I thought. Should I have done something more?

V. Upset

Dear Upset:

Unfortunately, these situations do happen. I am sure that you have heard everything I'm about to say, but it bears repeating.

It is understandable to be upset, and it is not unreasonable to let the site know about your disappointment. However, it's important to remember not to burn your bridges. You may be in contact with the site again, either personally or as a professional.

It is good that you let the site know that you were disappointed. If you have suggestions as to how they might have operated differently, you could have shared that information, as well. You could have also let them know that if the contract with this other candidate did not work out, you would still be interested in their opportunity.

My advice is to remember to keep as many of your options open as possible by practicing professionalism under such circumstances. Respectful restraint and face-saving manners allows you to maintain a friendly relationship with the site, which you may need in the future.

The flip side of this situation is when a practice site has heard repeatedly that an interested candidate has agreed to sign a contract. The site proceeds with plans to bring the candidate into the practice and then, without warning, the

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Community Assists Hospital with New R & R Plan

Peace Harbor Hospital in Florence is in the process of creating a recruitment and retention plan that just may change the way you work with physician candidates. The plan focuses mainly on retaining physicians but, like any good retention plan, it starts with good recruitment policies that are intended to select candidates and families that will feel comfortable and invest in the community both personally and professionally.

This innovative plan came about through the Florence Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP). CHIP seeks ways to improve local health care. The focus is on people becoming involved in health policy decisions as individuals and as concerned community members. Community members involved in the CHIP process identified concerns and developed solutions to health issues in the area.

“Recruitment and retention have always been priorities for the hospital, but more so recently because of the number of physicians leaving our community,” said Don Bourland, Vice President, Human Resources, Peace Harbor Hospital. “The CHIP group brought this priority to the front burner by ranking lack of access to local physicians as the number one community health concern. They asked the hospital administration to find out why physicians were leaving Florence. The group was resolute about retaining the doctors we already have, and wanting retention to be the focus of any plan to increase the availability of local physicians.”

Based upon studies that support the premise that a good retention plan is preceded by a good recruitment plan, the first step in the recruitment plan was to form an initial screening process to identify good matches for the hospital and the community. Cindy Crossly, Employment Coordinator, Physician Services for Peace Harbor Hospital, and the CHIP group created a screening process to use for recruiting. “Upon initial contact, I have an in-depth conversation with the physician about the surrounding community, as well as the hospital,” said Crossly. “I provide them with the local Chamber of Commerce web site, basic information about the area, the hospital system and the job site. We really emphasize that this information should be shared with the spouse.”

Crossly initiates a call the following week to determine if the candidate and family are still interested in the opportunity. “At that point I ask key questions about the information I gave them the week before to see if they have looked at the web sites and discussed the opportunity with their spouse,” explained Crossly. “This conversation identifies key concerns the physician may have and is also the point of entry for information about the physician’s family. I ask about their spouse’s interest, if they have kids and if so, what are their ages.”

At this stage, Crossly involves the family by providing the candidate with information on area K - 12 schools. “We worked with the school superintendent to have information available for a potential physician’s family about the school system, and to provide the family with a tour of the appropriate educational facility if a visit to our site occurs.”

“If the candidate still seems like a good fit for the community, we connect them with Dr. Sherry Catlin, Medical Director of the PeaceHealth Siuslaw Region,” said Crossly. Dr. Catlin assesses their clinical training and background, provides information about working within the regional system, and for PeaceHealth, and provides answers for health system questions. “We want the physicians to feel they are an integral part of the whole regional system,” said Crossly. “This allows the candidate to gain a perspective on how the position at Peace Harbor Hospital relates to the surrounding communities.”

The CHIP group and Crossly worked together to formulate the initial screening process to use during recruitment. Creating a retention plan was the next phase to conquer in order to attain the goal of keeping physicians in the community.

The main component of the retention plan is a mentoring program. New physicians will have an experienced physician as a mentor for their first year at PeaceHealth. “We found that physicians often lack information about the basics of working at the hospital,” said Bourland. Mentors can act as a resource for everything from employee benefits and finding the restrooms, to providing pointers on hospital procedures and resolving patient issues. “We know that our physicians value interaction with their colleagues, and want to feel connected to each other.”

PeaceHealth plans to take that need for connectedness a step further by emphasizing that the physicians are a unified team. “We are looking at publishing a newsletter just for physicians and their families,” said Bourland. “Possibly hosting a reception whenever a new physician comes on board, introducing them to colleagues they otherwise wouldn’t have a chance to meet,” he continued. “Spouses would be invited to these events as well, allowing them to form social connections.”

In fact, one innovative part of Peace Health’s retention plan is to involve the physician’s spouse in a social mentoring program. “We think we can get family members involved and familiar with the community by providing them with a social mentor,” Crossly explained. “A volunteer willing to introduce the spouse into a social club, or involve them in an activity in which they have expressed an interest, can help form connections to the community.” Crossly expects the CHIP group will offer ideas to implement the program, and volunteers to act as social mentors.

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doesn't meet your expectations, you could save thousands.

Remember, searching for a practice opportunity is stressful for the candidates. It's not easy to remember everything one hears under these circumstances. Even with exceptional communication from the hiring organization, it is difficult for the candidate to have a complete and clear understanding of a new area and employment situation. A draft contract will eliminate much of the potential for miscommunication and misunderstandings.

Involve members of your Board of Directors, and/or community providers in the recruitment of a new provider. Prepare them to accurately express information and details about the opportunity and the community to a potential candidate.

Competition is tough, and the picture is not improving, but you are in a position to influence the future of medicine in your community. Physicians are choosing from among several offers, so getting your 'ducks in a row' will help you be ready to hire when the right candidate appears at your door. You can make your opportunity the one that stands out in the candidate's memory. You can impress the candidate with the presentation of your opportunity. There is a good chance for success when attention is paid to every detail. This makes the candidate feel confident about choosing the opportunity. These details are shared in a complete, clear, concise manner in the draft contract. The candidate leaves your site with this draft contract in hand.

After the candidate has been given the draft contract and they are no longer at the site, someone needs to be responsible for maintaining contact with the candidate, preferably the administrator or senior partner, someone who has the authority to negotiate. This communication conveys your continuing interest in the candidate. It is a good way to provide updates on the recruitment process – and find out if there are questions about the contract that need clarification. Is there additional community information you could provide for the candidate or their family? Keeping the candidate informed as well as engaged by providing new information will confirm your continuing interest and keep their interest piqued.

This is the time to contact the candidate's references and let the candidate know whom you are contacting. You could ask the candidate for colleagues or hospital staff that can provide information about the candidate's appropriateness for your opportunity, and support your hiring team's impressions of the candidate.

If you are interested in a candidate, you need to let them know by being prepared to hire, supplying them with a detailed draft contract, and continuing regular communication with them. If you aren't doing this and someone else is, who do you think will end up with the provider?

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candidate indicates they have chosen to sign with another practice. The site experiences the same disappointment and frustration. If you ever find yourself on this side of the coin, I encourage the same respectful restraint and mannerly behavior. This candidate may be great and end up on your doorstep yet again under circumstances that would allow for a mutually beneficial relationship.

Finally, I encourage everyone to realize that 'life' just happens. When this sort of event occurs, the new pathway we find ourselves on is often better than the one we were pursuing. Straightforward communication, such as making the other party aware of the consideration of other options, may have eliminated a lot of the disappointment and resultant frustration. Best wishes for your next experience.

Kind regards, *Aunt Jo*

For recruitment and retention assistance, feel free to contact Jo Johnson, Recruitment Services Coordinator, toll-free at 866-674-4376. Please send your questions for Aunt Jo to johnsjo@ohsu.edu or FAX to 503-494-4798.

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Additionally, the hospital plans to host events specifically for physician spouses. Newcomers will have access to long time community members and support from others within the health care community. This component of the retention plan helps the physician's family become connected to the community, and is an important ingredient in keeping a local physician.

Peace Harbor Hospital currently is in the process of implementing these retention plans. "I am forging ahead with the preparation of our screening tools for the mentoring program. It is a program we would like to apply region-wide," expressed Crossly, "and we are addressing the layout of the professional mentoring program as well as the social program." The follow-up of good recruitment policies with innovative retention plans will, hopefully, be the key to helping the community of Florence meet their goal for more access to local physicians. The hospital intends to do personal face-to-face and on-line surveys to assess the effectiveness of their efforts and make adjustments to their plans to assure meeting their goals.

For more information on the Peace Harbor Hospital Recruitment and Retention plan please feel free to contact Jo Johnson, Recruitment Services Coordinator, Office of Rural Health via email at johnsjo@ohsu.edu, or 503-494-4450.

**The HERO Program at the
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