

# Orientation: The Bridge from Recruitment to Retention

## by Sue Simmons

The negotiations are over, the contract is signed and the new physician has arrived on your doorstep. Do you cross your fingers and hope his introduction to your system is a smooth one? Do you leave it to chance that he'll know where to park his first day or know what form to complete when his first patient needs to get an xray? Retention starts the first day on the job and you can take a positive step toward a successful future by planning a thorough, friendly orientation program for you doctor **and** his family.

Three different areas require orientation, the practice setting, the hospital, and the family.

### The Practice

**Assign a mentor.** Ask another physician in the group to take the new physician under his wing. Discuss the role and make suggestions for time carved out of schedules to sit and chat about problem patients or issues. This way no one feels awkward about infringing on patient time.

**Prepare a practice handbook** (nothing fancy) to use as a resource. Include names, titles and phone numbers of key individuals; description of call responsibilities; examples of forms frequently used; practice guidelines; home phone numbers of the physicians in the group; computer access codes; etc.

**Develop a check list** of other people you feel would be helpful in explaining what they do and how they can work with the new doctor, i.e. lab manager, business office. A smile and a handshake start a positive relationship. Schedule these people into the physician's first couple of weeks.

**Prepare a little bio** on the physician to share with the staff before he arrives. Include some interests (clinical as well as some personal).

**Suggest a mix** of "meetings and greetings" and patient care for the first two weeks. Scheduling two full days of back to back department introductions makes for an unhappy clinician.

**First Day on the Job - Celebrate!** Hang a welcome sign; put flowers on his desk; have a special staff luncheon. Make him feel he's worth waiting for.

### The Hospital

Don't wait until he's scheduled to rounds on patients for the first time to **introduce him** to the facility. A mentor works well here, too. Allow for adequate time for shadowing and informal introductions. Piggy back that onto a formal orientation program (does your hospital have one?). **Don't forget the obvious!** ID card, computer access, location of credentialing office, physician lounge, etc.

### The Family

You probably spent a great deal of time dealing with the spouse during the recruitment process. Don't drop her now! The happy (or unhappy) family assimilation can greatly influence the attitude of the new physician.

**Recognize the first day** on the job with a gift basket sent to the family at home. This includes them in the feeling of celebration.

Encourage the physician mentor (or another local physician) to **host a small dinner party** within the first couple of weeks for the new family in the area.

Identify a "**spouse mentor.**" Another spouse in the area could call and offer assistance, information, etc.

If more than one physician is brought on in a year, **get the new spouses together** for a luncheon. Give away some tickets to cultural or sporting events to encourage community interaction. Bring in someone to do a presentation on availability of community activities.

Organize a **family gathering** for all new physicians and their families. Try a picnic, pot luck supper, sledding party, etc. Many friendships arise from gatherings of people who are in similar situations. ▼

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