

DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES PROTECTING YOUR PRACTICE FROM THEFT

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CONTACT US:

To request an appointment, ask a question, consult about an issue of concern or find out more about the resources & services available through the PAP:

Call us at 800-777-1323
(or via TDD at 800-777-4969)

Visit us on the Internet at:
www.1stchoicedoc.com

The First Choice Health Physician Assistance Program is dedicated to excellence in client care and customer service. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you anytime a need arises.

QUALITY, CONVENIENCE, & RELIABILITY

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. If specific health or medical advice or assistance is desired, the services of a licensed healthcare professional should be sought. The information in the First Choice Health PAP Quarterly Newsletter is not meant to replace the advice or expertise of your physician or healthcare provider. If you are experiencing health problems or contemplating lifestyle changes such as diet or exercise, consult your healthcare provider ahead of time to ensure your well being.

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Majid Mohadjer, Web Developer - <http://www.1stchoicedoc.com>
Amanda Engel, Desktop Publisher



Bringing Balance to
Work, Home, and Life

As most of our readers are aware, in addition to providing a Physician Assistance Program, First Choice also provides an Employee Assistance Program for a wide range of employers in business and industry. Through our column **Practice Management Strategies** we select topics of a business nature such as management & supervision, corrective actions, hiring strategies, and conflict resolution, that might be of value and interest for private practice physicians and their clinic operations.

One area of employee management that is often overlooked by businesses and private practices is employee theft. Most doctors in practice probably “overlook” the sudden need to order more pens, pencils, note pads, glue and other common school supplies every September, or that as the weekend approaches, the packets of gourmet coffee seem to disappear from the break room. In the scheme of things, this level of theft is pretty “small potatoes”-- right? But consider that the U.S. Department of Justice reports that internal theft within businesses totals \$60 billion a year. In a recent study of individuals who were successful in drug treatment, over fifty percent admitted they had embezzled or stolen money or property from their employer to support their addiction. Individuals with problem gambling behavior also often admit that they funded their activities with money “borrowed” from their employer.

Medical practices are no exception to theft, and with their hectic schedule physicians typically are all too happy to turn over the financial details of their practice to their staff. There are many news stories about bookkeepers, practice administrators and even partners embezzling funds.

Suggestions for Fraud Prevention

- One common mistake is not separating cash-related activities among two or more individuals. Dividing responsibility for collecting and posting payment and completing deposit slips helps minimize opportunities for fraud.
- Have your practice mail addressed to a post office box rather than your place of business.
- Reconcile receivables and charges every day, and require a receipt for each transaction. Balance these at the end of the day.
- Require duplicates of all deposit slips.
- Stamp all checks “for deposit only” immediately upon receipt.
- Verify your petty cash balances.
- Have an auditor or bookkeeper conduct an unannounced outside audit—it is worth the cost and sends a message that you watch your clinic’s financial activity.
- Have your accountant compare expenses to previous years to look for unexplained increases in expenses, payroll, adjustments or refunds.
- Ask your accountant to review your current procedures and make suggestions for improvement.
- Refrain from the use of signature stamps or signing blank checks.
- Check the references of all new employees. See our Fall 2002 Newsletter Article on Hiring the Right Person available online at www.1stchoicedoc.com for guidelines on interviewing and references, or contact the PAP at (800) 777-1323 for more information on this topic.



1-800-777-1323

FIRST CHOICE HEALTH

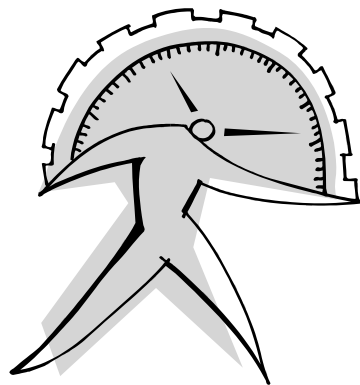
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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SURE, I ENJOY WORKING 60 HOURS A WEEK!

In talking with many physicians and in meeting with Medical Staff Members, Executive Committees and Physician Wellness Committees there is frequently an expressed concern that many doctors are frustrated and are considering a change in profession.

This concern has been reinforced by several recent news reports that physicians are leaving the practice of medicine for other careers. Others are staying in medicine but accepting positions with business and industry or electing early retirement.



Recently the AMA announced that numerous factors may be contributing to a physician shortfall and urged that medical schools expand their enrollment. Other Associations and Societies are also reporting shortages of physicians in specialty areas. The liability crisis is also influencing where some doctors choose to practice (creating geographic, regional or state shortages according to recent new reports).

Within the Physician Assistance Program we frequently hear comments and frustrations expressed about the cost of running a practice and the extra energy needed to “keep the doors open.” Extra paper work, the increase in the number of patients that must be seen each hour, managed care and the influence of sixty-hour weeks - all of this takes a toll on personal, family, and professional life.

- Since 1980 US medical school have graduated between 15,000 and 16, 000 students a year.
 - The U.S. population has increased 24% since 1980, with no increase in medical school graduate numbers.
- AMA, Jan, 2004*

Communicating Effectively: Assertiveness

Being “assertive” means expressing yourself directly, honestly and respectfully - increasing the likelihood that you’ll favorably influence others (and that you’re open to being influenced). Assertiveness makes it clear to others what your preferences, needs, expectations and intentions are. Assertiveness builds bridges. It opens the door to interaction, collaboration and understanding. In short, assertiveness can reduce stress and increase effectiveness – in your practice as well as in your personal life.

By choosing and practicing assertiveness, you’ll discover it’s often possible to minimize power struggles, misunderstandings and conflicts. This allows you to accomplish tasks and goals with far less effort and struggle. An atmosphere of assertiveness makes creative, respectful disagreement and problem solving possible.

To learn more about your interpersonal communication style, point your Internet browser to the PAP web site at www.1stchoicedoc.com and look for the Awareness Tools button on the main page. From there you can assess your level of assertiveness and learn more about your predominant interpersonal communication style.

We are pleased that many doctors and family members have contacted the Physician Assistance Program and taken advantage of our clinical services. Others have consulted with our staff and developed methods of approaching difficult workplace situations. Others have downloaded sample Policies and Procedures from our Web site to assist in managing their practice.

As part of our services you have unlimited consultation with our clinical and Human Resource certified staff to help you solve some of those work related issues. The PAP exists to support physicians in balancing the conflicts and demands of work and home. If the Physician Assistance Program can be of assistance to you please call 1-800-777-1323.

THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL?

Eric Chrismer, PAP Support Specialist

When you contact us to initiate a referral to a Physician Assistance Program (PAP) provider you will always speak directly to a PAP staff member—you’ll never be asked to navigate a menu of telephone options or to leave a voice message. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, you’ll be greeted by a PAP customer service representative - a trained person who will invite you to discuss your questions, concerns, or reasons for contacting the PAP. The information you share with the PAP is confidential.

To make the referral process convenient and efficient, you’ll be asked just a few simple questions about your concerns and preferences. From there the Physician Assistance Program staff can identify a qualified professional (from our network of more than 2000 licensed Psychiatrists, Psychologists and Licensed Mental Health providers), near your work or home. We also realize that some physicians would like to see providers in neighboring communities and that they often prefer peer-to-peer services with a psychiatrist or psychologist. To arrange these services and to be helpful and effective responding to your concerns (or those of your spouse, partner or dependent loved one), we will ask a few questions similar to these:

- What is your name?
- Which hospital are you affiliated with for PAP services?
- What health insurance coverage do you have (so that we can connect you to a provider who could continue to provide services after your no-cost PAP appointments)?
- In which city would you like to meet with a counselor?
- What are the telephone numbers at which you can be contacted?
- Is it OK to leave a message for you at those phone numbers?
- Would you prefer to meet with a male or a female counselor?
- Generally, what is the issue or concern you’d like to discuss?
- Is this a crisis situation (is anyone in danger at this time)?



Once the PAP has taken the time to carefully understand your questions or concerns, we will identify a provider in your preferred location who will contact you by phone to offer dates and times for an initial appointment. Speaking with the provider by phone gives you the opportunity to ask questions about their background, training and counseling style.

The quality of the match between the client and the provider is very important. The PAP customer service representative will ask you to let us know if the PAP counselor is - for any reason - not a good match for your preferences and concerns. While that situation is rare, the PAP knows that the quality of the connection makes all the difference and we will identify another provider for you to meet with.



Rest assured that no information is revealed to anyone other than the PAP provider. We will never release information to anyone without written authorization from you. The Physician Assistance Program was created for the convenience and benefit of physician families and First Choice Health PAP staff members will always go the extra mile to make the referral process as straightforward, convenient and comfortable as possible.

We invite you to contact us by phone at 1-800-777-1323 or online at www.1stchoicedoc.com. Your PAP is committed to delivering excellence in client care and customer service. We look forward to the privilege and opportunity to meet your needs and surpass your expectations.

“Be master of your petty annoyances and conserve your energies for the big, worthwhile things. It isn’t the mountain ahead that wears you out - it’s the grain of sand in your shoe.”

– Robert Service