

FIRST CHOICE HEALTH

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

<http://www.FirstChoiceDoc.com>

Practice Management Strategies

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When work performance problems surface within a private practice, the first inclination is to look the other way and avoid the situation, especially if the person is a key employee. Thoughts run through our head like “well, at least they are here, and if they leave I won’t have anyone to do the work” or “I’ll deal with this tomorrow, when we don’t have so many patients scheduled.” The end result of putting off confrontation on performance issues is usually more problematic behavior. Other staff members may also become disgruntled when obvious problems are not being addressed.

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You have invested in all your employees through training, time and energy - providing suggestions and guidance. When an employee is having performance difficulties it is often secondary to problems outside the workplace. Marital problems, parenting problems, and financial concerns all influence an employee’s attitude and behavior. Being in the helping profession, physicians and clinic managers often want to help by attempting to solve the employee’s personal problems. In business, the first rule Human Resource Directors list to managers is “do not become involved in the personal problems of employees. Your responsibility is to provide accurate feedback on work performance, and to make sure company policies are not being violated.”

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That is easier said than done. A manager should observe work performance, document problems in real time, and provide specific feedback to the employee when changes are in order. If an employee is late each day, begin by keeping specific, objective records of dates and times. This sounds tedious but it is necessary and saves energy should the problem increase or expand. Perhaps an employee is having difficulty with emotional outbursts. Again, you or your clinic manager should document these events by date, including what specifically happened, and how others were effected by the behavior. You also then need to respond to the employee and set expectations for change. If your clinic has an Employee Assistance Program, you may want to refer the employee for professional help in identifying the underlying problem.

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When responding to an employee regarding work performance problems, remember that you can call the Physician Assistance Program and consult about strategies for resolving problems and inviting positive change. When meeting with an employee about behavior or performance problems, make sure you do the following:

- Inform the employee you want to meet for ten minutes to discuss their performance problem.
- Select a secure and private location.
- Have specific documentation, with dates, times and events identified.

Continue: Practice Management Strategies

- Clarify that your goal is to help the employee succeed in their work.
- Clearly state your expectation for change in behavior.
- Put it in writing, with a timeline for change.
- Remain focused and try not to be distracted or to accept excuses.
- Let the employee know that performance must change or progressive discipline will be used.
- Set a time to meet again in two weeks to provide feedback to the employee on changes in performance or behavior.
- Document the meeting time, who attended, what you told the employee, and what the employee told you.

The Department of Labor indicates that employers spend approximately \$20,000 to recruit, hire, train and bring up to full production even the most entry-level employee. It makes good sense to invest in your employees and provide the tool necessary for success. Consistent feedback about work performance is the first step in profiting from your investment.

For world-class resources to manage difficult—yet increasingly common—workplace situations, contact the Physician Assistance Program at 1-800-777-1323.

Need To Terminate An Employee?

Remember to check your process with HIPAA regulations, which specifically address termination in Section 142.308(a)(11), and requires formal, documented instructions for ending employment and closing off internal and external access to e-mail, your information system, medical records. Regulations and a process to deal with office security, keys, and access cards are also addressed by HIPAA.

Take A Hike

Although the warm months may be bad for allergies, they are the perfect time to get outdoors and “take a hike.” Doctors tend to walk a lot, unfortunately most of that walking is between exam rooms or down the halls of a hospital. Many physicians are now scheduling a time to walk at noon if even for only a few minutes. Walking and hiking provides a chance to decompress and get some fresh air.

Weekend walks and hiking are also great ways to get away with the family. Most hikes do not require a great deal of special equipment, clothing, or even having a particular destination in mind. We live in an area where there are many local trails, and a wide variety of longer hikes in the mountains. Here are a few ideas for hiking with your family.

- ❑ Walking with your partner or spouse is a good time to talk and discuss what is going on in your life.
- ❑ If you are hiking with young children, keep the hike interesting, throw rocks in a river for awhile, watch for small animals and birds.
- ❑ Vary your terrain, seek out new walking trails, try a higher elevation or a new route in the neighborhood.
- ❑ Forget about the pace, don't set a goal beyond your endurance. Work up to more difficult hikes and don't start with a hike that is beyond your training or endurance.

The important thing about your hike is simply getting out and enjoying your self. There are many local groups that organize outdoor activities, check the papers for scheduled events you might be interested in. Remember, drink water and be prepared for unforeseen injuries. Simple first aid kits are available at most sporting goods stores. Finally, never walk in an unfamiliar area without a good topographical map.



Fish Is Brain Food

As reported recently in a Press Release from the American Heart Association, researchers have discovered that a “fish-rich diet” could be an important long-term strategy for maintaining dietary lifestyle changes and managing weight – especially for individuals prone to carrying excess pounds. Research suggests that moderate consumption of fish lowers the level of the hormone leptin, which, at higher levels, appears to interfere with the brain’s ability to recognize that appetite – or the need for caloric intake – has been satisfied.



In human studies, higher levels of leptin were associated with increased risk for being overweight or obese. The research suggests that leptin’s potential to override the brain’s caloric monitoring system leads to overeating, excess weight, and increased health risks.

The researchers conclude that regular consumption of fish, defined as being at least twice per week, even in comparison to a vegetarian diet, may prove beneficial in lowering leptin levels, improving the brain’s regulation of the “off-on” hunger switch, and successfully maintaining a healthy weight. Additional information about health and your heart is available at <http://www.americanheart.org>.

Elder CARE

What should you do when your father becomes more and more forgetful? He can’t remember if he took his medication and frequently forgets to eat.

Your widowed mother had a stroke and she now requires round-the-clock care. You know she may need to be moved to a nursing home, but how do you find a good one? Is a nursing home your only option?

The average American woman spends 18 years caring for aging parents. One out of three people in the workplace are providing 8 or more hours a week in care to an elder parent or loved one. With the population of those aged 85 and older increasing three times faster than other age groups, sooner or later most of us will face the challenge of caring for aging loved ones.

First Choice PAP has long recognized the importance of Elder Care Consultation to assist Physician families in finding the right resource for loved ones. By being part of our PAP, you can call us anytime to ask questions or to seek assistance in arranging care or identifying resources that may be helpful in your care giving.

“The average American woman spends 18yrs caring for aging parents”

[Click here](#) to learn more about Elder Care services available through the EAP.

QUALITY, CONVENIENCE, & RELIABILITY

FIRST CHOICE HEALTH PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

First Choice Health PAP
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PAP 1-800-777-1323
TDD 1-800-777-4969
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With an established network of more than 1600 Behavioral Healthcare Specialists (psychiatrists, psychologists and licensed mental health counselors), the First Choice Health Employee Assistance Program will respond quickly, consistently and reliably to your concerns – and those of your family members.

Problem areas often addressed through the PAP include: Relationship Distress, Step-Family Conflict, Single-Parent Pressures, Workload & Workplace Stress, Addiction & Substance Abuse, Grief & Loss, Extended Sadness or Agitation, Feelings of Emptiness, Depression & Anxiety, Legal & Financial Matters, or Childcare & Eldercare.

The PAP is an individualized, easy to use, and confidential resource for you and your family members.

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 are contemplating lifestyle changes such as diet or exercise, to ensure your well-being, consult your healthcare provider ahead of time.

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