

Quarterly Newsletter

Practice Management Strategies

Dealing With Absenteeism:

Being in private practice, you understand that from time to time your staff will need to take time off for illness or to deal with personal or family matters. Most practice owners have also spent a good deal of time developing their benefits package, to include holidays, vacation time, sick leave and even personal holidays. Other practices have moved to a Paid Time Off plan in which an employee is given a set number of days off each year to use as they please. For the most part, your staff members exercise good judgement in taking these days - and most people like to have a "bank of hours" to use in case of an emergency.



Unfortunately, as an employer and business owner, avoiding these confrontations only leads to more complicated problems. Here is an action plan for you or your Clinic Manager to use that will be effective in managing employees' attendance behavior.

Educate Your Staff — Believe it or not, employees often do not understand the importance of *consistent attendance* and don't realize the long-reaching problems caused by *unplanned days off*. Review and explain your policy on attendance and days off with your current staff and all new

employees at the time of hiring. This policy should be in writing and every employee should have a copy.

Keep Accurate Attendance Records – It is very important that you document daily attendance problems prior to confronting employees about being late, leaving early or taking unplanned days off. Confront late arrivals or problem attendance immediately, and note the reasons given.

Counsel The Employee – Always meet with employees in private to address work performance problems. Discuss their attendance record and tell them what changes you expect. Your policies may require that you give an employee a "verbal" warning followed by a "written" warning. Did you know that unless you document and have an employee sign an acknowledgement of a verbal warning that it is not enforceable? Keep a written record of your supervision and disciplinary meetings with each employee.

Continue to Observe and Give Feedback – Reinforce any positive changes in behavior. "I really appreciate that you have been on time every day for the past two weeks, Thank You!" If tardiness or unexcused absence continues, be prepared to respond by taking additional corrective action. Review your Personnel Policies, document all meetings with the employee, in addition to the times or dates on which they continued to be late or absent. Your response at this point could include suspension or termination.

Call Your Physician Assistance Program— Remember that as part of the Physician Assistance Program, you or your Clinic Manager can call to discuss a wide range of practice issues - including how to approach behavior or performance problems. There is no cost for this service.

Unfortunately, there will occasionally be employees who abuse your leave policy. When this occurs, there is a natural tendency for other staff to become angry. You may have heard the comment, "I'm tired of doing my work AND their work when they don't come in" or "He called in sick again today, when are you going to do something about this? It's just not fair!"

For most of us, "doing something about it" is not something we look forward to, and there never seems to be a "good time" to address behavioral and performance problems.

Need A Human Resource Form?

Visit www.firstchoicedoc.com
You will find a wide range of forms that will be helpful in your Practice Management. Please feel free to download and use these forms at no cost as part of the PAP provided by your Medical Staff Office. Available forms include:

- Application for Employment
- Employer's Interview Script
- Drug Testing Policy
- Office Emergency Instructions
- Employee Performance Evaluation Form

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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:



The First Choice Health PAP 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.



**Bringing Balance to
Work, Home and Life**

The PAP Quarterly Newsletter is published by First Choice Health Physician Assistance Program

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Adult/Elder Service For Your Family Available Through The Physician Assistance Program



Caring for an older parent can be rewarding, yet difficult, especially if your elder parent is located several thousand miles away. **First Choice Health PAP's Adult/Elder Care Consultation and Referral Service** can help you and your family find answers to your care giving questions. For example, families call for information and resources for a variety of reasons including decisions related to living independently or in an assisted living facility, caregiver support for the employee/family, legal & financial information, and resources related to medication, death & dying, and grief. For example:

- Through Telephone Consultation Services, experienced consultants who specialize in the expert care of older adults will assist you and your family in finding the right care for elder parents.
- This service is available on a nationwide basis. The Physician Assistance Program will assist you in developing a plan to help your older parents, whether they live nearby or miles away.
- Community resources are identified and educational materials tailored to each family's unique needs.
- Our consultants will follow up with you and your family to ensure complete satisfaction and determine if there are any additional needs.
- All services are provided as part of the Physician Assistance Program and there is no cost to you and your family to use the program.

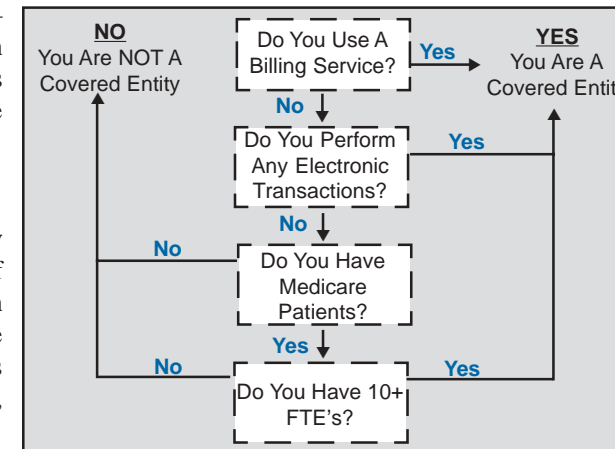
If you are concerned about an elder's well being or want to find additional resources to assist your parents, no matter where in the USA they live, please contact the Physician Assistance Program at 1-800-777-1323

Our Elder Care Consultants will be pleased to assist you

Continued From Our Last Issue: HIPAA and Your Practice

HIPAA Myths - (There are so many to choose from!)

Myth #1 – I'm too small to be affected by HIPAA – Incorrect. Practice size is only one criterion in determining if you are a "Covered Entity" or not. This simple flow chart should help clear up the misconception.



Myth #2 – I don't need to worry about the Security Rule until it is finalized – Incorrect. Many aspects of the proposed Security Rule facilitate implementation of the Privacy Rule, so the Security Rule needs to be considered immediately. Yes, some detailed aspects of the Security Rule will probably change. However, the fundamental aspects are already established.

Myth #3 – My software vendor is dealing with all my compliance issues - "I'm covered" – Incorrect. Software is only a small aspect of HIPAA compliance. You will need the participation of multiple vendors to assure compliance. The list of vendors and products/services includes Manual & Materials, Workforce Training, Office Cabinet Products, Legal Services, Software Vendors, and Network Specialists. No single company can claim to provide all these resources.

Did You Know?

- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) reports that approximately 500,000 practices filed for an extension by the October 14th deadline.
- CMS will not accept extension forms after October 14, 2002, so don't try to file one now. The recommendation from CMS is to become compliant as quickly as possible and be prepared to submit a Corrective Action Plan in the event that a complaint is filed (against your practice).
- CMS will continue to enforce the insurance portability requirements of HIPAA. The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) will enforce the HIPAA privacy standards. CMS and OCR will work together on outreach & enforcement and on issues that touch on the responsibilities of both organizations - such as application of security standards or exception determinations.

This article was provided by **HIPAA Solutions Rx**. Located in Portland Oregon, HIPAA Solutions offers a full range of products and services to assist healthcare providers with HIPAA compliance. Reach them at 503-579-4484 or at www.hipaarx.net

Strategies for Practicing Self Care During the Holiday Season

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Manager of PAP Services

For most of us, the holiday season is a yearly ritual of shifting into emotional and physical overdrive. We do this in an attempt to embrace the traditions of the season and manage the increased demands on our time. What's frequently overlooked amidst the hustle of the holidays is the importance of replenishing the energies of the self.

Here are some strategies for practicing self care and maintaining balance throughout the holidays:

- Take frequent breaks to stretch and release the tension that collects in your mind & body. This is easy to do – even at work.
- Meditate or sit quietly - inhale slowly and deeply through your nostrils, and exhale slowly and fully - allowing troublesome thoughts to dissolve. As the writer Montaigne noted centuries ago: *The pleasantest things in the world are pleasant thoughts; and the great art of life is to have as many of them as possible.*
- If you have an exercise routine, maintain it to minimize the negative effects of holiday stress and seasonal pressures.

- Take short walks (even for 10 minutes) in a place that allows you to refocus your energies, appreciate your surroundings, and connect with the spirit of the season.
- Choose foods that support your energy over foods that cause you to feel bloated and tired.
- Realize that inconvenience (especially when traveling and shopping) is a common feature of the holiday season, and be prepared to adjust your expectations and responses accordingly.
- Establish new traditions and activities that are meaningful and replenishing to you, and consider letting go of activities or obligations that cause you to feel as if you're merely "going through the motions."

- Schedule time to replenish your energies before launching in to the next "big thing" on your seasonal to-do list.
- Avoid becoming over-committed during the holiday season. Identify your priorities, and give yourself permission to seek quality over quantity.
- Make use of the range of Physician Assistance Program services available to you. It can be very helpful to spend time with an effective counselor to prepare for the traditions, family gatherings, and emotional experiences of the holiday season. A few solution-focused visits can help you find ways to achieve greater balance, establish a plan for regular Self-Care, and work through the conflicting feelings of joy and dread that are commonly experienced at this time of year.

**All of us at First Choice Health
PAP wish you and yours a
satisfying holiday season and a
healthier-than-ever 2003.**

1-800-777-1323

