

FIRST CHOICE HEALTH

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

Practice Management Strategies

REWARDING YOUR EMPLOYEES

As we approach the holidays, many physicians and clinic managers think about end-of-year rewards for their staff. Perhaps it's taking the staff to lunch or dinner as a group, a bonus, or a traditional holiday gift.

As a medical practice, it is important to celebrate the year's achievements and the holidays may be the most appropriate time to say thanks to the people who make your practice or clinic a success. If there is one thing that successful physicians and managers have learned it's that *everyone* wants to be appreciated and recognized for their work. In fact, we all need and want others to help us feel valued and appreciated. When people feel recognized and appreciated they become committed to the future and best interests of your practice and are much less likely to seek a new employer.

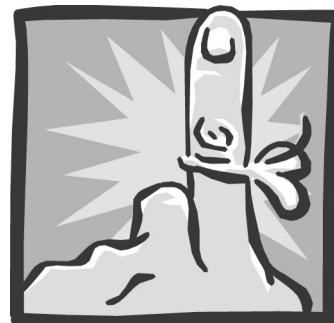
In today's medical workplace, employees are asked to do more and to function more autonomously. Every demographic predicts a continued decrease in the availability of nurses and other medical staff. Replacing an employee in a medical practice costs between \$20,000 and \$30,000 for the most entry-level positions. In looking at employees who are happy at work, studies indicate that employees find personal recognition more motivating than money. Unfortunately, in a fast-paced medical environment it is rare that a manager or physician can extend words of appreciation to each staff member. At this time of new year's resolutions, the First Choice Health Physician Assistance Program offers a few ideas for recognizing and rewarding individuals and your entire staff. Keep in mind that these activities are not only for use during the holidays but throughout the year.

- A brief *written* note of thanks means a great deal especially with a "c.c. Personnel File" at the bottom.
- Recognize extra effort and give verbal praise immediately for work well done.
- Develop an Outstanding Staff of the Month Award with a plaque in your reception area.
- Reward employees with clinic logo items (Polo

Shirts, Jackets, etc.) for one year, two-year and five years of service.

- Purchase tickets to events or items for charity fund raising. Make these gifts from your clinic and then give the tickets or items to your employees.
- Cater lunch once a month for all staff.
- Offer a deserving employee a change in title or level of responsibility.
- Place an ad in your local paper thanking each staff person by name for the work they do in helping your patients.
- If your goals for patient satisfaction and revenues are being met, give an unexpected mid-year or end-of-year bonus (perhaps a crisp \$50 or \$100 bill) for each staff member.
- To increase competency and to reward at the same time, pay for attendance at an outside seminar or conference.
- Hand out 'Extra Effort' coupons when you see initiative above and beyond the expected work from your employees. Rewards could include prizes such as gift certificates, a weekend get away, concert tickets, spa visits or perhaps a top prize of a laptop computer.

There are many other ways you can recognize and reward people. The important thing is that your staff members enjoy being at work and conveying the message that you truly appreciate their contributions. Salary is what you give your people for doing the work they were hired to do. Recognition celebrates an effort beyond the call of duty.



HONEY, WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?

For most couples, the dreams they have for their children start in the delivery room. Remember when you were making plans for the arrival? You probably went to classes. You were prepared to take your newborn home from the hospital and made sure you had the safest crib, car seat and baby care equipment. You realized that it's never too early to start the college fund to be able to afford the very best schools. You and your spouse were caring, devoted and involved in every aspect of raising your children. As parents you provided well for your family - after all, you were in the "boomer generation," perhaps the healthiest, most privileged and most successful generation ever. You wanted things to be better and easier for your children than what you experienced growing up.

You were among the super parents - working and balancing your home responsibilities. You earned more and made sure your kids had the latest clothes and video games. You recognized early that children need their own car and cell phone to get around and stay in touch. You were proud when they graduated from high school and went off to college. Five years later they completed their undergraduate degree - perhaps from your alma mater. It took that extra year for those special classes - but that was fine - and then they went on to graduate school. Graduation was a proud day and you were eager to support your son or daughter in finding that first job and becoming a productive young adult.

After all - looking back - that is what you did.

But then something strange happened, they came back home to live with you again. They "boomeranged" right back into their old bedroom.

The 2001 census found that nearly 40% of young adults have moved home with their parents, and many have made several false starts at living independently. Parents are understandably frustrated that after investing \$100,000 for education, the son or daughter accepts a low paying position at the local espresso stand (because they did not want the stress of a more demanding position or could not find work that was spiritually meaningful).

So, now that they are back, what are you going to do?

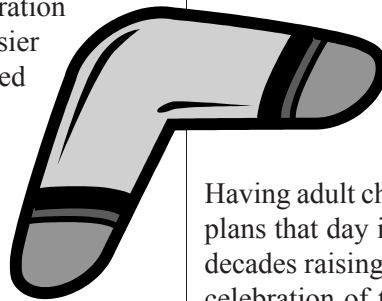
Parents in this situation experience a wide range of emotions ranging from confusion to frustration - including anger, disappointment, embarrassment and resentment. Perhaps the most frequent feeling is guilt. You reflect that something you did as a parent must have set the stage for this behavior. Were you too liberal, did you expect too much, did you read the wrong parenting book? Feelings of guilt and parenthood seem to go hand in hand and it is very difficult to say no to a child who just wants "to move back in for a month or two."

Many children who move back in with their parents report a diminished sense of self, have difficulty making commitments to work or relationships, or feel adrift when it comes to planning for work or the future. How could this happen to your kid?

Having adult children move back in with you was not in your plans that day in the delivery room. You spent two or three decades raising kids and were planning some special trips in celebration of the "empty nest." You and your spouse had thoughts of getting out of the rat race and restarting your lives together. For many parents that dream is not panning out.

As parents it is difficult to say NO to our children for many reasons. Paramount for most is an intense fear that children will be angry or that we will alienate them if we deny the request to move back home. Deep inside, we may also fear that they truly could not make it on their own.

There is comfort in knowing you are not alone and that almost one in two families shares the same experience. The First Choice Physician Assistance Program receives calls each month from parents asking for support in reclaiming their lives and encouraging adult children to live independently. If you are experiencing a "boomerang" event it might be helpful to meet with an experienced family counselor to determine how best to establish expectations & boundaries for your adult children. Although we cannot see your adult child through the Physician Assistance Program, our staff will be pleased to facilitate a referral to a skilled and experienced provider within your community.



Eldercare: Are You Prepared?

Many of us know adult children who have to make difficult decisions for an older adult (and aren't familiar with the older adult's wishes, resources, or finances). It's wise to be aware of the considerations of caring for an older adult.

Have critical information written down (or printed) and easy to access. When the need arises there won't be a frantic search for information. Review documents at least annually. Make sure everything is current and correct. Here's the information you need to get organized:

Contact Information

- List names of children and their phone numbers
- List names and phone numbers of other emergency contacts
- List important contact people, such as attorneys, accountants, pharmacist, neighbors, and close friends – include phone numbers
- List the name and phone number of the manager or staff of the residence where your elder lives
- Drivers License Number and Social Security Number

Insurance Information

- Medical insurance carrier(s), phone number and account number - including Medicare and Medicaid information
- Long-term care insurance information, phone number and account numbers

Medical History

- Medical conditions or health problems
- Physician names and telephone numbers.
- Medications and amounts taken daily.
- Release of confidential health care information - providing the physician with the name of the person with whom medical information can be shared (this form requires regular updating)

Health Care Directives

- Durable power of attorney for healthcare decisions (with names of those who can make healthcare decisions if your elder is unable to)
- Medical directives (what your elder wants in critical medical situations). This includes "living wills" and the person's wishes regarding resuscitation

Legal Information

- List all legal documents: advance directives, wills, end-of-life directives, funeral arrangements, powers of attorney, etc.
- Write down where important documents like deeds, birth certificates, or insurance policies are archived

Financial Information

- A list of all sources of income, such as Social Security, retirement income, etc. Include account numbers
- A list of the location of all bank accounts and investments. Include account numbers
- A list of all consumer debts, credit cards and account numbers
- A statement of net worth



Having these details ready helps you manage the stress of an already difficult situation. Contact First Choice Health PAP for additional resources and information about responding to the needs of your parent or aging loved one. Reach us at (800) 777-1323 or online at www.1stchoicedoc.com

TEENAGERS AND GAMBLING

There is increasing concern regarding teenagers and gambling. Studies indicate that the earlier an individual begins to gamble, the likelier it is they will become addicted or a problem gambler. By the time they reach sixteen years of age, fifty-four percent of adolescent boys and sixteen percent of females have placed bets on sporting events, card games and other activities *each month*. The explosion of gambling sites on the Internet complicates an already serious social problem.

If you see adolescents in your practice, you may want to consider asking if they gamble when you assess their drinking and smoking history. Clients with depression or problems with compulsive behavior may be particularly at risk.

Information on problem gambling and the warning signs is available through the National Council on Problem Gambling at www.ncpgambling.org

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Winter Newsletter

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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

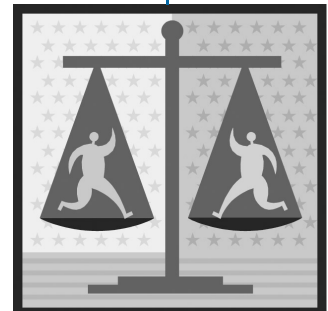
The First Choice Health Physician Assistance Program is dedicated to excellence in client care and customer service. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you anytime a need arises.

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