Skills for Therapy Managers

The Essential Guide to Recruitment and Retention
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The tools you need to hire—-and keep—the right therapists

This first-of-its-kind, professional resource provides therapy managers with practical, field-tested strategies to attract and, more importantly, retain high-quality therapists.

The Essential Guide to Recruitment and Retention: Skills for Therapy Managers breaks down the recruiting and retention process, through case studies and hands-on strategies so managers get a clear picture of what they need to do to keep their department or clinic fully staffed.

This guide provides therapy managers with:

• Recommendations on developing and retaining qualified therapists
• Tips on creating an employee- and family-friendly work environment
• Sample forms such as performance reviews, professional development worksheets, and skill assessments
• Sample case studies that illustrate how to maintain positive work environments, elevate staff morale, and understand the relationship between collaboration and teamwork
• Tips and strategies to retain therapists and keep them satisfied with their jobs
• Advice about developing relationships with schools and universities

Turn to The Essential Guide to Recruitment and Retention for the answers you need to employ and keep the right people for your facility.
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Make the change: You can stop the door from revolving

How many times have you promised yourself that next time you will handle things differently? Yet when that time approaches, it’s easy to revert back to our old and comfortable behaviors.

Now is the time for you to commit to changing your recruitment and retention attitude and behavior. At a time when the facility down the street may simply dangle a recruitment bonus to recruit staff, you need ammunition you can dangle back to keep staff from moving out the door. Therefore, recruitment and retention needs your ongoing attention.

The disadvantages of high turnover

For every therapist you keep, consider the savings in time and money that did not have to go toward hiring and orienting a replacement therapist. Also, consider that lower turnover places less stress on the existing staff. As managers, we know all too well that staff members already feel overwhelmed by their daily responsibilities. For most of them, covering the patients (and the revenue) or helping to orient a new therapist feels like a burden rather than a privilege. Even once the orientation process is underway, someone still has to fill in for the therapist who left, and you may find yourself begging staff members to pick up more hours or to cover more undesirable weekend and evening hours. Furthermore, your budget changes as you pay overtime for coverage on top of the salary of the new person being oriented, and you must absorb the hit to your revenue budget from not being able to bill for the therapy you don’t have the staff to cover.
Chapter 1

**Staff in, staff out**

As I was heading to work on the long commute one morning, all I could think about was how to find people to fill the three empty therapy slots for the skilled nursing facility located on our hospital campus. With one of my best therapists on the inpatient rehab unit leaving at the end of the month, and continual turnover problems in the outpatient therapy clinic, revenue was going to be down, physician complaints were going to go up, and the rest of the therapy staff was going to be physically and emotionally stretched.

I tried to concentrate on the drive, but my mind kept reverting back to the therapists I had lost in the past year. For each one, I kept asking myself, "What could I have done differently? Did they leave because of me, the organization, coworkers, or another reason? Would administration think I was the cause of therapists walking out the door?"

I know it was not a financial issue, as our salaries and benefits were very competitive. I dreaded the thought of the time I would have to spend going through advertising, applications, and interviews and all the stresses that go along with that process.

I promised myself that this time, things would be different; this time, I would not wait for people to tell me they wanted to leave. Instead, I would find a way to identify what I could do to keep them. For those who are still on staff with me, I would create a process I could use to work with them to ensure that they don’t become a new statistic in the revolving door of therapy staff.

New therapy managers often have not been given the education, tools, and resources to manage recruitment and retention. Many organizations now realize the important role you play, not only in retention, but also in the likelihood that your staff members will recommend their place of employment to others. This book will provide you with resources and will guide you in using leadership skills to embrace the concept that you are the number one therapy recruiting officer for the organization.

**Changing perceptions**

The first step is to be realistic. You may need to change your attitudes and perceptions regarding keeping and recruiting talented staff. If any of the following thoughts are still in the back of your mind, make an attitude adjustment before you can hope to find success with your recruitment and retention strategies:

- “What more do they want from me? They’re getting paid for what they do.”
- “In my day, we were just grateful to get the job we wanted.”
The revolving door

- “I’m getting really tired of ‘making nice’ just to keep people from leaving.”
- “This new generation expects so much from us, but they are the first to say no to working a weekend or holiday shift.”

These are the realities of rehab and therapy practice today. We are once again cycling through a therapy shortage, even if some areas of the country are experiencing more challenges than others. Our work force of baby boomers is getting older and retirement is very much on the horizon, and the new, young professionals are from a generation that has different values and expectations regarding their job. The role of the therapy manager has changed—you are more of a leader now than ever before.

**Therapy managers play a key role**

Realize the importance of your leadership role. You can find a way to ensure that the revolving door moves only when you want it to. You can embrace the research and evidence about work environments and how they directly affect the staff’s perceptions. If money is the only thing people want, why do so many healthcare professionals, including therapists, report being dissatisfied with where they work, the resources available, and the managers to whom they report?

One of the most commonly uttered phrases in the healthcare tradition is “that’s how we’ve always done it,” but it is time to go ahead and break tradition. It is time to embrace new processes that will reap benefits not only for therapy staff, but also for patient care. You are taking a giant step forward as you embrace the contents of this book.
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