
7. Personnel

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Determining Staffing Requirements

Learning objectives

- ◆ Outline considerations for delegating tasks.
- ◆ Prepare job descriptions.
- ◆ Review the role and qualifications of a good office manager.

Delegation of Tasks

"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion."

*Parkinson's Law
C. Northcote Parkinson*

The number of employees your practice needs depends on the work to be done and the degree to which you delegate it. Some physicians work without any staff in order to reduce practice expenses and complexity. However, not delegating tasks often means spending time on marginally productive activities and can stunt practice growth. Other physicians delegate tasks to many employees so they can spend more work time on income-producing activities. Increasing employees, though, increases practice overhead and complexity.

Staffing a Small Practice		
Solo physician	Function	Typical Staffing
Total staff typically 3.0 to 5.0 employees	Reception/cashier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 to 1.5 employees • May share patient accounting tasks.
	Clinical assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 to 2.0 employees • May be medical assistant, nurse, or practitioner.
	Patient accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 to 1.5 employee • Includes coordinating managed care plans.
	Office management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any of above employees may do management tasks. • Typically less than 20% of time.
Additional physician	Function	Typical Staffing
Typically add 2.0 to 4.0 employees	Reception/cashier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add about .5 to 1.0 employee
	Clinical assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add .5 to 2.0 employee
	Patient accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 1.0 employee
	Office management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional 5% to 10% of an employee's time to do management tasks.

Consider hiring part-time employees if there is not enough work for full-time employees or if the workload is uneven. Also, consider job-sharing in which two part-time employees share one full-time position. Many skilled people do not want to work full time. What's more, paying part-time wages and reduced benefits can be a significant savings to you. See your accountant for details and legal requirements.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions help you and your employees focus on their roles. Develop a job description for each position in your practice.

The major components of a job description are:

- ▶ Job title
- ▶ Job summary (one or two sentences)
- ▶ Supervisor or supervisory responsibilities
(Each employee should have only one direct supervisor)
- ▶ Qualifications
 - Education
 - Skills
 - Previous experience
- ▶ Job duties

Begin each statement of the job's duties and qualifications with an active, third-person, present-tense verb, such as *answers*, *prepares*, *schedules*. Be brief and clear. Provide details only when necessary but do not describe specific procedures.

Note how often the task must be done and other performance standards: e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, as time allows, completed within two days of service. The total workload should be distributed evenly among the staff.

If you are concerned that an employee might refuse to do a particular task because it is not in his or her job description, include "*Other duties as assigned*" as the last job duty. As an employer, you cannot ask employees to do tasks that are illegal or dangerous to themselves or others.

The *Job Description Template* and *Typical Medical Office Job Duties Checklist* at the end of this chapter will help you get started.

Sample Job Description

Job title

Receptionist

Job summary

Schedules appointments and answers telephones for the practice.

Supervised by

Office manager.

Qualifications

1. One year experience as receptionist in a medical office or similar job.
2. Ability to deal with people in person on the telephone in a friendly, effective manner.
3. Well organized.
4. High school graduate. Additional vocational training or college courses a plus.
5. Nonsmoker in the office.

Job duties

1. Answer the telephone within three rings, direct calls, and take messages.
2. Sign in and out to answering service to obtain messages at the beginning and end of office hours.
3. Schedule patients' appointments using the practice's computer system.
4. Prepare appointment recall and reminder notices using the practice's computer system.
5. Greet and check in patients as they arrive for appointments.
6. Obtain patients' demographic and insurance information using the practice's computer system. Verify and update at each visit.
7. Other duties as assigned.