



# Orientation Guide for New Clinicians

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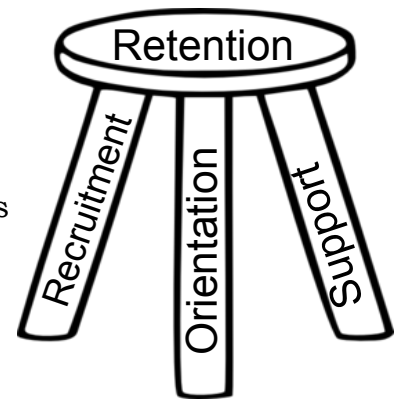
## Orientation Benefits

- ◇ Increased commitment
- ◇ Reduced turnover
- ◇ Higher staff morale
- ◇ Fewer disciplinary actions
- ◇ Reduce recruitment costs
- ◇ Greater productivity

Staff retention can be one of the most challenging aspects of any business, but even more so for administrators of community health centers and clinics. For those clinics located in rural areas, the challenges are compounded by their distance away from medical schools. Many factors account for the challenges, and there is no single best way, one-size-fits-all strategy to address them. This guide is intended as a resource for community health centers and clinics wanting to improve their clinician retention efforts with a focus on the orientation phase of a retention plan. Users should feel free to take what fits and create their own checklists from the ideas listed herein.

## Retention Phases

A comprehensive retention plan is actually a 3-pronged process that includes recruitment, orientation and support to the incumbent workforce. Much has been written about finding and hiring the right employees and there is a great deal of attention to ongoing staff support. Organizations such as the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and the various state Area Health Education Center (AHEC) programs can provide valuable assistance to clinic administrators (see Resources pg.4).



There is less guidance available on how to conduct an effective orientation for new clinicians. Orientation is the planned introduction of new employees to their jobs, co-workers, and the organization. It is much more than reviewing the Personnel Handbook and completion of the required personnel documentation.



**A quality orientation program will energize and integrate new hires. It can also reduce turnover, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in recruitment costs in a very short time and helping to maintain continuity in patient care.**

# A Quality Orientation Program

Socialization of new employees reinforces their initial commitment to the organization. Patient care can be affected by the quality of the orientation clinicians receive.

One reason people change jobs is that they never feel welcome or part of the team they join. As a result, many chose to simply move on rather than try to find their place in the new organization. When this happens, the organization they leave behind is once again faced with the need to recruit, screen, hire, orient and train another new employee. The cost to replace a clinician has been estimated at anywhere between \$150,000 and \$300,000. This certainly makes the case to invest in an effective orientation program.

A new employee's initial experiences in an organization have major and lasting effects. If those experiences are positive the employee is much more likely to form positive attitudes towards the organization, the supervisor, other team members, and patients. If the initial experiences

are unpleasant, negative attitudes are formed and those attitudes are hard to change. Every new team member wants to succeed and to be accepted by peers.

When a quality orientation program is included as a component of an organization's retention program, it is easy to understand how the organization benefits. Not so readily obvious is the positive effect on other providers and support staff within the organization, who are required to pick up the additional workload when vacancies occur. Patients benefit from less disruption in their care management. And, finally, the community benefits from adequate health care staffing, contributing to the overall health and economic stability of a community.





## Before the New Clinician Arrives

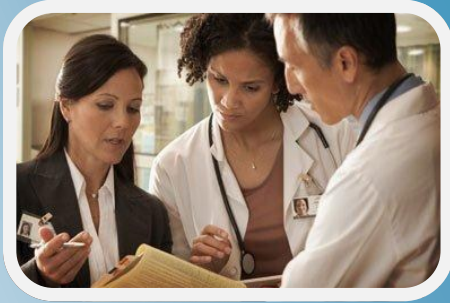
Send a letter to the new hire that details salary and position and any agreed upon special accommodations.

The letter should also include:

- List of documents needed on the first day for human resources
  - Date, time and location to report
  - Information about parking, dress code and any special upcoming events
- HR/Administrative staff and the immediate supervisor should be prepared to make the new clinician feel welcome.
- Prepare other employees in the department for the new team member
  - Have a work space ready for the new team member including needed supplies
  - Have computer and phone ready including log on and/or other access needed by the new clinician
  - Assign a co-worker or peer as a mentor to answer questions after the initial orientation.
  - Arrange for a welcome lunch (or other meal) meeting with supervisor, mentor and other team members during the first few days of employment.

## Orientation Topics

- √ Mission, Vision and Goals; and where the new hire fits into those goals
- √ History; overview of structure and hierarchy, patterns of growth and change
- √ Tour of the facility beyond the new employee's immediate department
  - *Introduction to all employees and highlight key relationships*
- √ Company benefits, both tangible and intangible
- √ Employee events and expectations for participation
- √ Work place cultural norms
- √ Clinical Policies and Procedures
  - *Scope of practice including FQHC or other clinical regulations*
  - *Local health care delivery system*
  - *Network of supporting physicians*
  - *Internal clinical committees, e.g. QI or local health plan*
- √ Department procedures and relationship to other departments
  - *Supervisor workload monitoring and expectations including quality, quantity and periodic review*
  - *Identify ways to support practice preferences, specialty interests and goals that were shared during the hiring phase*
- √ Tour of the community if new to the region
  - *Community population and culture(s)*
  - *Community resources and partner agencies*
  - *Community organizations and service clubs*
  - *Local activities and community celebrations*
  - *Identify community connections for spouse and/or other family members*
- √ Use local media and other resources to introduce new clinician to the community



## Points to Consider

- Include all of the information needed to help the new clinician be successful. Be aware of overloading the initial orientation.
- The CMO and/or HR representative should follow-up with the new clinician a few weeks into the employment relationship. This provides an opportunity for clarification and to introduce additional information.
- Consider the best location to minimize interruptions.
- Present the information effectively using a variety of techniques such as live discussions, video and electronic information.
- A Mentor can provide valuable follow-up to the orientation and questions.

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For questions about NHSC, please contact your Regional HRSA Office at 415-437-8090 or visit <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov>

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# Retention Resources

California Area Health Education Center, with links to a FREE webinar series for health care professionals and administrators, [www.cal-ahec.org](http://www.cal-ahec.org)

California Employer Advisor, free guide to orient, integrate and retain your new employees  
<http://www.employeradvice.com/public/main.cfm>

California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, [www.oshpd.ca.gov](http://www.oshpd.ca.gov)

California Primary Care Association  
<http://cliniccareers.cpcpa.org>

Health Workforce Initiative, Butte Community College, Chancellor's Office, CCC, Best practices from a small rural hospital, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmpseE77NH14>

Linzer, Mark MD, Preventing Clinician Burnout, 2013, Center for Patient and Provider Experience, Hennepin County Medical Center, Madison, Wisconsin

National Health Service Corps, <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/sites/>

Pathman, DE, Fannell, J, Konrad, TR, Pierson, S, Tobin, M, Jonsson, M. Findings of the First Year Retention Survey of the Multi-State/NHSC Retention Collaborative, Nov, 2012.

Recruitment & Retention of Clinicians, Best Practices Model, 2005 Bureau of Primary Health Care

Society for Human Resource Management, [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org)

