

How to Develop a Personnel Policy Manual

By Sherri Henderson Steenson

Policy manuals are an often overlooked necessity in the running of any business. The employer may feel he has explained "the job" during the interview process, but a policy manual will make sure the employee has those words in writing. With the relatively small number of workers employed by most dental practices, the basic dental office can be turned upside down by not having a clear understanding of "the rules."

Purpose

The basic purpose of a personnel policy manual is to prevent misunderstandings. It should simply and clearly tell the employees what you expect from them and what they can expect from you. The manual must also be kept up-to-date with current policies.

A Clearly Written Policy

Finding the proper words and expressing oneself often hinders a dentist from creating a clearly written policy. No matter the state, developing a practice of good communications is important. Understanding of the needs of employees is essential to being a good supervisor.

Positive Staff Morale

Make a positive effort to be fair to all employees in all situations and the result will promote trust. Appreciating and recognizing their work through regular performance reviews is an excellent way to retain good employee morale. The manual should emphasize that the employer will pay attention to fair wage raises and superior performance. Keep in mind that while high

wages do not guarantee good work, low wages almost certainly will result in second-class employees, frequent turnover, attitude problems and poor performance.

Legal Aspects

It is generally agreed that announced personnel policies are legally binding both to the practice and the employee. Working in a healthcare environment only adds greater importance to the purpose and sensitivity of all written policies. Employees need to understand their roles in formulating these written policies and they must know their opinions are essential in maintaining quality control and good communications among the healthcare team.

Who is Accountable?

Before one begins to prepare a manual, there are a few important decisions that must be addressed. To whom will employees be accountable?

Do the Same People Supervise both Administrative and Clinical Staffs?

Because each practice will be different according to size and organization, it is important to know who will make and maintain these policies. It is natural to assume that the dentist would be the policy maker in his practice, but at times these tasks must be delegated.

Keeping Good Records

Each employee is responsible for the information in the office manual. Upon becoming a member of the office staff, the employee should be provided with his or her own copy of the policy manual. It should be used as a guide but should never

be considered complete. With basic communication, the employees can take care of each other by being responsible and mature in their jobs, and the patients will be more fulfilled in their care. After the employee has been issued the written manual, he or she should sign an acknowledgement page that indicates that the information has been read and understood. This document would then be placed in the employee's personnel file.

(Previously published in *Dentistry Today*, May 1993.)

About the Author

Sherri Henderson Steenson is the owner of Sherri L. Henderson & Associates, a management consulting firm in Dallas, Texas, and is an active member of the Academy of Dental Management Consultants. She has consulted throughout the United States for over 20 years. Her emphasis is on organizational management, including finances, computer skills, marketing, staff relations and treatment planning, and her articles have been published in national publications. Ms. Steenson is available for in-house consulting, speaking engagements and private group seminars. She can be reached by calling (972) 562-1072.



Sherri Henderson Steenson

DD

Sherri L. Henderson &



ASSOC.

Professional Healthcare Consultants

Serving the Healthcare Industry Since 1971

- Internal Customer Service
- OSHA Training
- ZIP Code Fee Analysis
- Space Planning & Design
- Practice Transitions
- Employee Referral Placement
- Policies & Procedures Manuals
- Patient Scheduling Concepts
- Personality Profiling (DISC)
- Practice Sales
- Treatment Planning & Case Presentation
- Team Building & Staff Relations
- Accounts Receivable & Collection Management
- Utilization of Automated Systems
- Practice Associateships

"Our goal is not just to meet your needs, but to exceed them."

Call for a Complimentary Telephone Conference

921 Circle In the Woods
Fairview, Texas 75069

972-562-1072
email: sherrilh@att.net