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Introduction

As a medical practice leader, you draw on many strengths to achieve your goals: your abilities, your knowledge, your dedication, and your team.

Running an effective office starts with staffing. Having the appropriate personnel in place will support the ideal of care being patient-centred, help you turn your vision and values into action, and maximize your ability to focus on the practice of medicine.

Human resources (HR) is a challenge for any organization. For physicians, who are understandably busy with direct patient care, this can be especially so. That’s why the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) has prepared this guide, which provides advice on determining your staffing needs, recruiting your team, creating a code of conduct, motivating your employees, conducting performance appraisals, and more. You’ll also find useful tools, such as a sample job description, interview questions, rating form, and links to key HR legislation.

In any medical practice, your staff can contribute immeasurably to efficient day-to-day operations, the patient experience, and your ultimate success. Use this guide to help make smart HR decisions.

For questions or more information about managing HR, please call the OMA’s Practice Management and Advisory Services toll-free at 1.800.268.7215 (416.599.2580 in the Toronto area), or email practice.management@oma.org.

1. What staff do I need?

Factors that influence staffing decisions?

Staffing is the process of selecting and training individuals, and charging them with specific responsibilities. In a medical office, a combination of four factors typically shape staffing.

1. What is the medical specialty? The type of services that you offer may require a specific number or types of employees for adequate support.

2. How many providers do you have? Whether you have two physicians or 25, medical providers need adequate staffing to support them in delivering quality services. Research other medical offices to get a sense of the typical number of employees per physician, and help ensure that you’re not understaffed or overstaffed.

3. What is the patient volume? The number of patients treated daily, weekly, monthly, and annually creates the workload, and can dictate the staffing level required.

4. What kind of productivity do you want to achieve? The ratio of staffing to services rendered, as well as the roles you have assigned, will affect your efficiency.

These factors don’t always remain permanent in a medical office. As they change, so can your staffing needs, so stay flexible. Staffing will also be shaped by the type of organizational structure you prefer (e.g., centralized or decentralized), and how much responsibility you want to delegate. There is no single correct approach. In assessing your staffing requirements, the goal is to have a team in place that can meet your expectations for serving patients.

Defining your staff?

You can think of staffing in terms of three levels: leadership, management and direct service providers. A solo practitioner in a small medical office may need to fill all roles, while larger offices will have more delineation between the levels. In general, staffing in a medical office can encompass these roles:

- **Office manager**, responsible for the administrative/business side, while doctors and nurses take care of the clinical side.
- **Licensed clinicians**, such as a Nurse Practitioner, nurses, and other health-care professionals.
- **Medical secretary**, responsible for patient scheduling, medical report transcription, medical records management, and medical billing.
- **Billing specialist**, responsible for managing the information related to OHIP, WSIB and uninsured billings.
- **Receptionist**, responsible in small medical offices for the telephone, welcoming patients, and in larger offices for patient appointments.

Keep in mind that in some settings, staff will perform multiple roles. In fact, cross-training can be advantageous to allow proper coverage in cases of sick days, holidays, etc. On the other hand, specialization allows for undivided attention. The precise definition of roles is up to each office. See Appendix A for more guidance on staffing.
2. The hiring process step-by-step

Having decided on your staffing needs, you must prepare to select the right candidate. Your odds for success can increase dramatically by following a systematic procedure, from writing a job description right through to hiring an individual. Follow these nine steps, and remember, as an employer you need to become familiar and comply with several pieces of HR legislation (see Appendix B).

1. Writing a job description

A job description is a primary screening device that informs perspective candidates of what the job entails, and outlines the qualifications needed to perform it satisfactorily.

For each position, list all duties and responsibilities, ranking them based on the importance of the function, and the time needed to perform the duty. Clearly state all formal requirements, such as experience, education or special training (see Appendix C for a sample job description).

These qualifications, along with the level of responsibility, will determine the salary that fits the job description. Colleagues, hospital personnel, administrators and employment agencies can give you guidelines for pay scales and benefits in your area.

Attempt to establish standards for each job function, which you can later use to judge performance. Ideally, include methods of applying the standard in the job description.

2. Establishing employment conditions

Job candidates are entitled to know about the position being offered, general working conditions, and your expectations for performance. Before starting recruiting/interview, you should establish the conditions under which employees will be hired.

Be realistic in creating these guidelines. If the conditions do not match expectations, and the job is not as described, you may lose candidates and conditions do not match expectations, and the job will be hired.

3. Developing a policy and procedure manual

As you develop positions on a variety of practice and workplace issues, document them in a policies and procedures manual. These are the rules by which you operate, and will help you to train staff, ensure that the office runs efficiently and in a consistent manner (even if you’re not around), and maintain productive and clear working relationships.

Policies and procedures can cover a wide range of topics, such as the length of a probationary period, work hours, absenteeism, standards of conduct, dress, how to complete specific tasks, sending claims to OHIP, recording information in patient files, and much more (see Appendix D).

4. Recruiting and screening candidates

To solicit candidates, consider several options:
- advertising through local medical societies, websites, newspapers, and community hospitals
- contacting the placement office at a community college, and
- using an employment agency, which usually charges a fee based on the percentage of the newly hired employee’s salary (if you hire through an agency, be sure to obtain a time-related guarantee of satisfaction).

The method you choose might depend on the time you have available to handle responses and make the hire.

Recruit as many candidates as possible. The more applicants, the better your chance of selecting the right one. Ask for written resumes, and learn the art of reading them — ambiguous statements, frequent job changes and missing employment dates, for instance, can be danger signals.

Not everyone will match all of your requirements in every respect. You may not find the perfect candidate. But when you identify candidates with the appropriate work experience, training and personal characteristics, place them on your list for a preliminary interview.

5. Interviewing

Having selected the most promising resumes, arrange the interviews. This will permit you to:
- ask questions about the candidate’s job experiences
- gain some understanding of their personality traits
- form a first impression about their suitability
- explain duties and responsibilities in detail,
- provide information on fringe benefits, hours of work, etc.

The types of questions you ask during the interview are important (see Appendix E for some sample interview questions). Ask each candidate the same series of questions so that you develop a common basis for comparison. Focus on each candidate’s competence, character, and drive, and take notes about their strengths and weaknesses so, that you can refer back when considering your final selection.

Confine your questions to job-related subjects. Government regulations and human rights legislation forbid you to ask questions related to age, sex, marital status, religion, race and a host of other topics. It is advisable to contact the Ontario Human Rights Commission (www.ohrc.on.ca) for guidelines on suitable questioning techniques.

Before the candidates leaves your office, obtain permission to contact their references.

6. Testing

After conducting a preliminary interview, you still need to assess and rank your candidates in order to make the best selection. Tests are one way to ascertain technical competence. Keep the tests with the candidate’s application and interview summaries — they will help you make your final decision.

7. Rating candidates

Another way of rating candidates equitably is an interview report form (see Appendix F for a sample form). This lets you quantify the skills and personality traits you consider most useful for the job. Evaluate the various categories with the job description in mind, only then can you assign meaningful weighting values. Fill out this form immediately after the candidate leaves your office, which helps keep the rating system objective.

If you aren’t comfortable judging the skills required of a potential employee, just rate the candidate on other characteristics, and seek assistance regarding technical competence. For example, you could have your accountant interview and give an opinion on a possible bookkeeper.

8. Checking references

Do your homework by talking to references of the most suitable candidates. It’s especially important to speak with the candidate’s immediate supervisor. The personnel manager may be reluctant to talk about former employees — often because they don’t know them well — and may not provide more than “yes” or “no” answers.
Ask questions such as:

- In what area did the person work?
- What kind of interpersonal skills does the person have?
- How was the quality of his or her work?
- What was their workload and performance like?
- What was the person’s attendance like?
- What were his or her best/worst attributes?
- What salary was he or she being paid?
- Why did he or she leave?

You may not get answers to all the questions, but you should be able to compare responses to the impression you formed from your own interview.

9. Hiring

Once you determine that a job applicant meets the position’s requirements, it is time to make a job offer (with the assistance of a lawyer, as needed). The job offer should include a probationary period with termination for any reason during that probationary period. Background checks such as criminal and credit, education and license verification, and references can be done during this period.

The OMA recommends that physicians sign written contracts with all employees, and has a variety of templates available for this purpose. Contracts must be signed upon employee acceptance of the offer, prior to the first date of employment.

Please contact OMA Legal Services or your own lawyer for further information on employment contracts and the hiring process.

3. Creating a code of conduct

What is an employee code of conduct?

Employee behaviours should reflect organizational values, which can be conveyed in an employee code of conduct. Essentially, a code of conduct is a business performance tool that sets out the rules and standards for staff. In a medical setting, that means the conduct that promotes quality patient care, and that reflects the expectations of the public for the employees who provide and support such care.

Who has to comply with the code?

Everyone in the organization. Strict adherence by senior managers and the owner/leader sends a powerful message to all members of the team. Consistent communication, compliance and enforcement can all help to boost both performance and morale.

Is a code of conduct legally required?

Generally, there is no legal mandate requiring business entities to create a written code of conduct policy for their employees. However, any business can be held legally accountable for the conduct of those employees. This is where the presence of a code of conduct can be useful from a legal standpoint. Should an employee’s conduct violate the code and the business face legal action, the employer can reduce (if not eliminate) the potential liability by arguing that the employee’s conduct wasn’t sanctioned.

Who should develop the code of conduct?

Each office has to create a code that meets their specific requirements for employee behaviours. While there are no guidelines for developing a code of conduct specifically for a medical setting, Appendix G offers a sample code.
4. Motivating and retaining my staff

Managing staff is really about motivating staff. Every employee has different needs, goals and priorities. By understanding and meeting them, you can increase your staff’s effectiveness and job satisfaction, allowing and inspiring them to work to their potential.

Motivation and retention go hand in hand. Motivated employees are less likely to leave, saving you from that loss, the cost of recruitment and training, and the disruption caused for the team. Here are five ways to think about motivation and retention efforts.

1. Keep communication open
   - Communicate your practice objectives and your staff’s role in achieving them. With a clear understanding of how they contribute to the success of the practice, staff feel a greater sense of accomplishment.
   - Keep everyone informed about developments, discuss important decisions in advance, and hold regular staff meetings.
   - Communication is a two-way process. Encourage staff to express their views on processes, job satisfaction, morale, etc. It’s important for employees to feel that their opinions are welcome. Moreover, staff feedback can help you to improve your practice.
   - Foster open communication, not just between you and your staff but among staff. That helps to create a more co-ordinated and better performing team — a feeling of “we” and not “me.”

2. Provide ongoing feedback

For employees to succeed, they need to know what they’re already doing well and what they could do even better. Provide prompt praise for their job well and develop new skills and motivates staff – flexible working opportuni- ties, team-building events, the chance for advancement, more varied work, bonuses, incentives, benefits, training and development, special projects, etc. Taking it all into account will help you to create a reward structure that all employees will value. Each employee should see a link between their efforts and their rewards.

3. Set clear goals
   - Organizations and individuals can succeed best when they’re working to a plan. Staff feel valued, motivated to improve, and part of the team when they have a clear idea of what’s expected of them. For each employee, set goals that are:
     - relevant: they mesh with your overall objectives
     - realistic: staff can directly influence them with their actions and behaviours
     - measurable: you have a way to determine if they’ve been achieved.

4. Create a satisfying environment
   - Staff are more likely to perform at their best (and to stay) when they’re working within an environment that supports and stimulates them. That means providing employees with:
     - a comfortable, safe, inclusive and respectful work setting
     - a well-defined role
     - the tools, time and resources they need to do their job
     - the help and training to enable them to do their job well and develop new skills
     - interesting challenges, and
     - appropriate rewards (see below).

5. Provide meaningful rewards
   - Salary is important, but it isn’t everything. Although remuneration and the promise of a bump in pay can be a motivator, rewards take many other forms, and complement a good salary. Also remember that not all employees are motivated by the same thing.
   - Consider the full range of what compensates and motivates staff – flexible working opportuni-
ties, team-building events, the chance for advancement, more varied work, bonuses, incentives, benefits, training and development, special projects, etc. Taking it all into account will help you to create a reward structure that all employees will value. Each employee should see a link between their efforts and their rewards.

5. Conducting performance appraisals

What is a performance appraisal?
   - A performance appraisal is a formal review of how an employee fares against objective criteria. The goal is to create a documented assessment of an individual’s performance, and a plan for future development.

What is the appraisal based on?
   - Appraisals compare the individual’s performance to their job description, and to goals and standards agreed upon at a previous appraisal.
   - A job description may change over time to meet the needs of the office. Always make any change with the agreement of the employee (and perhaps seek legal advice too). If the job description changed, base the review on the current one. Note that employers cannot unilaterally change the job description; this is akin to constructive dismissal.

Which staff should be assessed?
   - Formal performance appraisals are generally conducted annually for all staff in the organization. Each staff member is appraised by their direct manager.

How often should appraisals be held?
   - Once or twice a year is advisable. Aside from these regular appraisals, managers should have one-on-one discussions throughout the year with staff regarding work progress, training and development, career goals, etc. Either the staff member or their supervisor can instigate such discussions. These informal talks will make the actual formal appraisal less stressful and uncertain, and more productive.

Why are performance appraisals essential?
   - Formal appraisals are vital for managing the performance of people and organizations. They contribute to effective management by helping you to:
     - identify areas of strength and weakness among your staff
     - develop individual training
     - monitor standards, expectations and objectives
     - communicate the aims of the practice, and align individual and practice goals
     - foster positive relationships with staff
     - determine annual pay, and
     - improve overall organizational performance.

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     - foster positive relationships with staff
     - determine annual pay, and
     - improve overall organizational performance.
How should employees be rated?
Performance standards should not be unrealistically high, as the goal is not perfection but consistent striving for improved performance. Here’s one model for rating performance.

**Level A:** Superior accomplishments and ability. The employee always exceeds the requirements and standards of this position by a significant margin.

**Level B:** The employee consistently makes high contributions, in the quality and quantity of work, and demonstrates great initiative.

**Level C:** The employee performs all duties and responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. The standards set for the position are being met.

**Level D:** The general level of performance is below the standards set for the position. However, the employee possesses the ability and potential to earn a higher rating with counseling or minimal training.

**Level E:** The employee has failed to develop as anticipated, or performance is unsatisfactory for another reason. Training and assistance have not produced the desired level of performance. Termination of employment is likely the best option.

6. Terminating an employee

Letting an employee go is never easy, but is sometimes necessary. The rules on your obligations and the employee’s rights can be complex. For information, check the Ministry of Labour at http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/termination.php, or call the Employment Standards Information Centre at 1.800.531.5551. It is always advisable to obtain legal advice before terminating an employee. Here are some guidelines.

What justification do I need to terminate an employee?

An employer is not required to give an employee a reason why his or her employment is being terminated, so long as he or she is providing notice or pay in lieu of notice. To terminate for “just cause,” an employer should speak with a lawyer specializing in employment law. Demonstrating just cause can be difficult. Some steps that an employer may want to take in any case would include documenting non-performance over time. Ideally, an employer should be able to demonstrate that they have followed “progressive discipline” procedures.

For example, give an employee adequate warnings, from an oral warning (recorded in their personnel file) to a written notice stating the problem and proposed solution. It’s important to have the employee sign any disciplinary documentation placed in their file, and include any employee comments in response to discipline. If performance remains unsatisfactory, follow up by either a second written notice or termination.

What kind of notice is required for termination?

If the employee’s contract is limited to the Employment Standards Act (ESA), generally the employer must provide a written notice of termination, termination pay or a combination (as long as the notice and termination pay together equal the length of notice the employee is entitled to). The period of statutory notice vary depending on the length of employment, from one week for staff employed between three to 12 months, to eight weeks for staff employed eight years or more. The Ministry of Labour has a chart on its website (link noted above).

If the employee does not have a contract limiting notice or pay in lieu of notice to the ESA, the common law will apply. Often, this works out to one month of pay for every year worked up to a maximum of two years. In these cases, the courts will look at a variety of factors, including how senior the employee was, how long the employee worked for the employer, how old the employee is, what the employee’s chances of future employment are, and whether the employee was induced in any way to accept the position.

When calculating notice or pay in lieu of notice, it is recommended an employer speak with a lawyer.

When are employees not entitled to a notice of termination or termination pay under the ESA?

Examples include: employees who are guilty of wilful misconduct, disobedience, or wilful neglect of duty that is not trivial and has not been condoned by the employer, employees on temporary layoff, employees who refuse an offer of reasonable alternative employment, and employees who have been employed less than three months.

Employers should contact a lawyer prior to making decisions regarding notice or termination pay.

What are the employer’s requirements during the statutory notice period?

During this period, an employer must:

- not reduce the employee’s wage rate or alter a term or condition of employment
- continue to make whatever contributions are required to maintain the employee’s benefits plans, and
- pay the employee the wages he or she is entitled to, which cannot be less than the employee’s regular wages for a regular work week.

Final Thoughts

The success of your practice rests on your skills and strategies not only as a physician, but also as an HR manager. It’s vital to:

- clearly identify your staffing needs
- follow a process that ensures the best hires
- create the policies and environment to support performance
- look for ways to motivate and reward staff, and
- conduct staff reviews that lead to continual improvement.

The right staff, and appropriate staff management, can keep your office running smoothly, make a positive impression on patients, and yield more rewards than any other investment a physician can make in their practice.
Conclusion

This reference guide was designed to help physicians manage their medical office staff. Your specific needs will vary according to your specialty, location, type of practice (solo, partnership, group, etc.), and other factors. The information and advice presented here should be considered as a guideline only, not as a substitute for the advice (including legal and financial) you will need from your own professional advisors.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please call the OMA’s Practice Management and Advisory Services toll-free at 1.800.268.7215, or email practicemanagement@oma.org.

Appendix A: Assessing staffing needs

The following is a list of questions that will help serve as a reminder of the points you should address in the review of your HR needs. For someone who does not have an established practice, this should be part of your start up plan. Those joining an established practice can use this to assist in the staffing demands that your added presence will entail. You should also include additional questions if your office or clinic has specific requirements.

Internal

1. Will there be a change in the number of physicians or number of hours the physicians are working in the office?
2. Do you expect the permanent or temporary departure of one or more of your employees?
3. Are any of the physicians planning to change their activities in the office in a way that may impact the staffing needs (e.g., introduction of new in-office procedures, shifting the profile of the practice, etc.)?
4. Is the volume of patients seen by one or more of the physicians expected to change significantly in the future?
5. Are there tasks or processes that you could delegate to an employee?
6. Are there problems in your office policies that are hindering the proper function of your office (e.g., holidays, sick leave, internal communications, etc.)?
7. Are things falling between the cracks because tasks or responsibilities are not properly assigned?
8. Are there deficiencies in the actual layout or amount of floor space that is hindering employees from accomplishing their work?

External

1. Have there been changes in the labor laws or rules that may impact the way you manage your employees?
2. Do you expect changes in revenues or methods of payment for your services that may affect the budget for your staff?
3. Is there new technology to be incorporated into your practice that will have to be mastered by your staff?
4. Are there new work trends that may be a benefit or a threat to the way your office functions? (e.g., job sharing)
5. Is the community or area where you work changing in a way that may impact your ability to find proficient employees (e.g., changes in unemployment, economic changes, increase competition for employees)?
Appendix B: Select human resources legislation

- The Ontario Employment Standards Act (ESA), which sets minimum standards for conditions of employment in most workplaces in Ontario: http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/.
- The Ontario Human Rights Code, whose goal is to prevent discrimination and harassment and provide equal rights and opportunities in specific areas such as jobs, housing and services: http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/resources/code.
- The Workers’ Compensation Act, which provides compensation and other benefits to workers and to their survivors and dependents: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/repealedstatutes/english/elaws_rep_statutes_90w11_e.htm.
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which strives to make Ontario accessible to all: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm.
- Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, which upholds and promotes open government and the protection of personal privacy in Ontario (including private information on employees): http://www.ipc.on.ca/english/Home-Page.

Additional resources:
- Checklists of tasks for dealing with records of personal health information in compliance with the requirements under the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA). http://www.ipc.on.ca/images/Resources/up-abandononrec_chklst.pdf
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario www.cpso.on.ca

Appendix C: Sample job description

Job Title: Medical Office Assistant
Reports To: Office Manager/Dr. John Doe

1. Job Summary
The Medical Office Assistant will: provide high-quality reception and secretarial services to patients, doctors and staff in a caring and supportive manner, and maintain confidentiality of all information.

2. Duties and Responsibilities
- Greets and registers patients seeking medical attention in person or by telephone, including appointment booking and retrieval of patients’ charts according to established policies and procedures.
- Prepares and types correspondence from dictation, drafts and originates correspondence on designated subjects, including follow-up.
- Prepares billings for submission to patients, OHIP, WSIB and other third parties as required and according to established policies and procedures.
- Reconciles accounts payables/receivables, and produces day sheets and financial statements on a regular and timely basis.
- Handles prescription renewals, and maintains and organizes patients’ records (thereby responsible for keeping the patients’ records organized).

3. Education and Qualifications
- 2-3 years post-secondary.
- Previous experience in a medical practice environment.
- Proficiency in Windows operating systems.
- Knowledge of OHIP, WSIB and third party billings.
- Understanding of medical terminology.

4. Effort and Working Conditions
No extreme physical effort, working within a standard office environment.
Appendix D: Sample policy and procedure manual content

The contents of a Policy and Procedure Manual will depend on your type of practice. The list of topics can include (and may not be limited to) the following.

- **Medical practice’s mission, vision and values**

- **Administration**
  - Personnel policies
    - Hiring guidelines
    - Sample job descriptions (list of job titles roles and responsibilities)
    - Termination guidelines
    - Reporting guidelines
  - Salary
    - Payroll procedures
    - Salary grades and scale
  - Compensation (benefits, life insurance, etc.)
  - Laws and regulations
    - Office hours (include guidelines on breaks)
    - Overtime policy
    - Public holidays
    - Vacation time, sick leave
    - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

- **Office Management**
  - Code of conduct (see Appendix G)
  - Staff meetings
  - Conflict management
  - Harassment policy
  - Social media policy (Internet, email, etc.)
  - Use of equipment for personal use
  - Training and development
  - Health and safety procedures

- **Emergency Procedures**
  - Emergency telephone numbers
  - Basic staff preparedness
  - Emergency in office (with and without a physician)

- **Patient Management**
  - Telephone procedures (preferred greetings, customer service tips, etc.)
  - Handling angry patients
  - Patient privacy and confidentiality (leaving messages for patients, etc.)
  - Patient traffic flow procedures
  - Patient scheduling (appointment booking, cancellation procedures, etc.)
  - Medical records (filing, confidentiality, legal obligations, etc.)

- **Billing**
  - How to submit claims to OHIP and WSIB
  - How to reconcile Remittance Advice (RA) and Error Reports
  - How to bill and collect payment of non-insured services
  - Accounting procedures

- **Clinical area procedures**
- **Laboratory services procedures**
- **Hospital privileges**
- **Office inventory and maintenance procedures**
Appendix E: Sample interview questions

Below are some questions that can be helpful with starting a conversation in an interview:

1. Define teamwork?
2. What would you consider to be a great workplace?
3. What do you like the most and the least about your current job?
4. Describe your work style?
5. If I called your supervisor, what would he/she say about you?
6. Can you commit to work occasional overtime? (Ask this if the office hours may require the employee to work overtime or irregular hours.)
7. Do you complete your work on time?
8. How do you handle pressure at work? (A good answer can be, “I ask my supervisor for support or assistance when I feel overwhelmed by workload.”)
9. What would you do if you believe your supervisor is wrong about your performance? (A good response can be, “I would try to resolve my concern(s) by taking them to my supervisor.”)
10. What would you do if you believed your co-workers were doing something wrong?
11. What kind of support will you need to do your job well?
12. Why are you leaving your job?
13. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? (Ask for examples.)
14. What are your short-range plans? (Everyone should have an idea for what they plan to be doing in the next few years.)
15. Why should we hire you?
16. What is your salary expectation?
17. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me? (Always provide an opportunity for a candidate to ask a few questions.)

Appendix F: Sample interview rating scale form

Candidate: ______________________________________
Position: ______________________________________

When compared against the job description for which this individual is considered, do they have the experience required?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF COMPETENCE</th>
<th>RATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative experience — duties outlined in the job description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial experience — accounting, billing, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships — interpersonal skills, ability to meet/greet, communication, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory management — delegation, supervisory skills, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attributes — presence, analytical skills, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career progression — still growing/plateaued, long-term and short-term goals, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict of issues/other issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rating scale:
5 — Outstanding  4 — Above standing  3 — Competent  2 — Marginal  1 — Poor
0 — Non applicable
Appendix G: Sample employee code of conduct

(Note, this is an example only, and would not be applicable to all medical offices.)

I. PURPOSE: To provide standards for employee conduct that promote quality patient care and reflect the expectations of the public for medical practice employees who provide care to patients.

II. POLICY: All practice employees are expected to conduct themselves both on and off the job in accordance with the definitions and standards set forth in this policy. An employee who violates the expectations for conduct set forth in this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal. Not every situation that may arise can be anticipated and included in policy. Employees are expected to understand the fundamental expectations governing conduct and apply them to situations that may arise.

III. DEFINITIONS:

Guiding Principles: The practice has established the following guiding principles as a fundamental basis to guide organizational and employee behaviour:

- Keep people safe
- Treat people with respect, trust, and dignity
- Consider all patient needs with sensitivity
- Support informed choice and decision making
- Advance the mission of the practice through teamwork
- Ensure public trust through personal and professional integrity

On-the-Job Conduct: The employee’s response to any assigned duty, responsibility, expectation, obligation or behaviour required of the employee by the employer or the position.

Off-the-Job Conduct: The employee’s off-duty behaviour, which maintains expected ethical and conduct standards and does not discredit or adversely impact the practice’s image or public trust.

Public Trust: The holding of health-care employment is a public trust, created by the confidence that the patients have in health-care employees. That trust requires adherence to integrity, responsible performance, and correctness in conduct both on and off the job.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES:

Employees are responsible for their conduct and behaviour both on and off the job.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring employees understand the expectations for conduct outlined in this policy and appropriate follow up action is taken if expectations for conduct are breached.

V. PROCEDURE:

The following is a partial list of guidelines for conduct. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to anticipate any situation that may arise. Employees are expected to rely on their training and knowledge of practice policy, and when possible should consult with their supervisor or co-workers to address questions about whether a behaviour is acceptable.

A. Expectations for Employee Conduct

1. Be co-operative with others. Demonstrate good teamwork principles. Recognize that our organization is only successful if we are successful as a team.
2. Demonstrate initiative. See things that need to be done, don’t wait until you are told to do something.
3. Use practice guiding principles as a basis for decision-making.
4. Always be respectful of patients and their families. Respond to patients in a caring, empathetic manner no matter what their behaviour. Display a welcoming and hopeful attitude towards those we serve. Remember, patients are our customers, and they may present challenges, they are never a burden.
5. Always adhere to principles of patient confidentiality. Only share patient information with those who have a “legal right to know.” Never discuss patients in public places at work or away from work.
6. Uphold and reinforce the rights of patients.
7. Maintain self control and utilize appropriate conflict resolution strategies when confronted by people who are angry.
8. Refrain from sharing significant personal information about yourself, your family, or your co-workers with patients.
9. Maintain therapeutic boundaries with patients and former patients. Do not engage in any type of socialization or relationship that may be outside of the professional role of care provider. If in doubt, seek advice from supervisors or treatment team members.
10. Inform supervisory personnel of any patient with whom you have had a relationship with outside the practice. Request a modification in your assignment if a personal relationship with a patient may compromise your ability to provide quality, objective care.
11. Provide care for patients using the techniques and procedures taught in orientation and in-service education programs.
12. Report to work on time and as scheduled. Only leave your work area when properly relieved and with your supervisor’s approval.
13. Promptly report safety hazards and take prompt action to prevent injury to others until the problem can be corrected.
14. Follow the practice’s policy on tobacco use, and encourage others to do so as well.
15. Use telephones, radios, computer, and copier equipment in accordance with practice policy. Keep personal use of telephones to a minimum and do not let it interfere with practice business. Essential personal long distance calls must be collect, charged to a personal third-party number, charged to a personal credit card, or made using a calling card. Internet use must adhere to practice policy.

16. Always use proper telephone etiquette whenever answering the telephone or when calling others. Identify yourself and your work area, be courteous, offer assistance, write down messages and repeat names and numbers back to the caller to check for accuracy.

B. Unacceptable Conduct

1. Neglect or failure to properly carry out duties, responsibilities, or assignments.
2. Abuse, mistreatment or neglect of any patient.
3. Theft, wilful damage, misappropriation or neglect of patient property or property of the practice.
4. Insubordination or refusal to follow verbal or written instructions of a supervisor.
5. Any conduct such as use of alcohol, or use or sale of drugs, either on or off the job that adversely impacts the employer’s operation (including absence from work) or brings discredit upon the employer’s mission or public trust.
6. Wilful, intended or threatened harm to patients, family members, co-workers, or others.
7. Falsification of practice records (e.g., time sheets, patient records, travel expenses, omission of pertinent data, giving false testimony, etc.).
8. Behaviour intended to harass or threaten patients or co-workers.
9. Failure to report or disclose information concerning allegations of possible patient abuse, neglect, or other wrongdoing.
10. Improper disclosure of confidential information.
11. Wilful violation of law, contract, policy, or directives. Failure to carry out assignments or responsibilities.
12. Improper or illegal use of the practice’s telephone, radio, or computer network system. Improper use of the practice’s copy machines.
13. Unauthorized use of work time, equipment, or facilities for private business or personal use.
15. Failure to abide by the practice’s dress code or maintain personal hygiene in a manner acceptable to the practice environment.
16. Failure to appropriately respond in an emergency situation.
17. Unauthorized duplication or inappropriate use of keys. Loaning or providing keys to others without authorization.
18. Developing a relationship with a patient that violates expected patient-staff boundaries and therapeutic principles. Failing to report a personal relationship with a patient or former patient outside of the work setting.
19. Performing special favours for patients that are outside the medical treatment process, without authorization from the patient’s treatment team.
20. Failure to treat patients, visitors, co-workers, and the public in a courteous, productive, respectful, and otherwise acceptable manner.
21. Failure to follow safe work procedures.
22. Failure to dispose of bio-hazardous or infectious waste in designated containers.
23. Failure to report defective equipment or unsafe conditions.
24. Reporting to work under the influence of illegal substance. Using, selling, possession of illegal substances during work hours or on the practice’s property.
25. Failure to perform essential job functions.
26. Off-the-job conduct that may discredit the practice’s image and the public trust.
27. Use of profane or vulgar language (as commonly considered) in a manner that others find offensive.
28. Conducting business on behalf of the practice without the permission of senior management.

C. Discipline

Discipline and corrective action procedures for violations of the employee conduct policy will be handled in accordance with practice policies and procedures. Discipline will be commensurate with the severity of the violation, particularly the impact upon patients. Serious infractions, whether occurring on-the-job or off the job may result in dismissal from employment.