Indian Health Retention *Brief*

Volume 1 Issue 6

Staying Ahead of the Curve

The IHS Office of Public Health Support (OPHS) presents the sixth in its series of Retention Briefs designed to help address the challenge of retaining professional and clinical staff within an Indian health facility. We encourage you to review these cases and to discuss with the leadership team (administration, clinical directors, other leaders, etc.) how you can implement these practices when faced with similar challenges.

This issue discusses the importance of maintaining a good working relationship with the facility staff — beginning Day One. By ensuring good communication practices throughout all levels of your organization at all times (particularly on a clinician's very first day), you will be making an investment in a contented, committed and dedicated staff for the long term. Whether you set the stage for a comprehensive orientation for each new hire, arrange for new hires to meet face-to-face with senior management their first week on the job or always have an open-door/open-ear policy to keep your staff informed and appreciated, each welcoming gesture you make will lay the foundation for a successful and happy hire.

> *"Employees who feel they have a voice within the organization and are recognized for contributing are more inclined to stay where they are appreciated."*

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Best Practices

COMMUNICATION

Time for Thought — A "team" leader realizes that under certain situations, a careful, well-thought-out response will make a better impression on his or her staff than to immediately respond to a crisis or situation. This is especially true in situations that may potentially impact or undermine a supervisor. Before you escalate an issue, be sure you understand the supervisor's position and respond appropriately in a way that supports him or her. Likewise, it's important to keep your staff informed, from top-level management down, at all times during the handling of a situation or, if possible, before one arises. This way each contributor will be better equipped to handle an eventual outcome and will appreciate your keeping them in the loop.

ORIENTATION

The First Day — Be sure to set aside time for the arrival of new hires. Give them a comprehensive tour of the facility, introduce them to everyone with whom they will come in contact on a daily basis, arrange for lunch with a group of coworkers or have lunch brought in as a gesture of welcome. By extending this courtesy, you will not only help ease any "first day jitters," you will also demonstrate that you have time for the staff and are personally available to answer any questions. Extend an open-door policy should the new hire need assistance or direction. Once he or she has met with your HR department staff and other key personnel, arrange time for getting acquainted with the facility and its surroundings. Your efforts will go a long way toward ensuring that new hires feel comfortable on their first day and each day that follows.

EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

Make Time to Meet Top-Level Management — Often times, health facility top-level executive staff (CEO, Clinical Directors, Chief Medical Officers [CMOs]) are not directly involved in the hiring of a new clinician or other staff member. Therefore, it's a good idea to request a brief block of time out of the executive's schedule for a meet-and-greet with the new hire. It's a valuable way for the head of your organization to learn what brought a potential candidate to the facility and why he or she chose a career in Indian health. Not only does it serve as an introduction, it also is a personal gesture that will give the new hire a sense of belonging.

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

An Action Box — One of the most empowering experiences for employees is to have a superior act on their suggestions. It breeds goodwill and the good news travels fast. Conversely, bad news will also get around quickly, so it's important to take action. A suggestion (or action) box is a good way to encourage employee feedback and input. A good leader will take on an issue using his or her authority to cut through extraneous considerations that may otherwise hinder implementing an employee's good idea. Be judicious and timely, and make use of your position to keep the work environment harmonious and running effectively. Employees who feel they have a voice within the organization and are recognized for contributing are more inclined to stay where they are appreciated.

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