



Keys to Success - Released in March 2016

Motivating and Managing Staff for Success

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Hiring the right staff is a key factor to building a successful safety net dental practice. Recruiting providers and staff can be challenging and once you find the right person it is important to make sure they are satisfied and stay motivated! Programs with leadership who foster open communication, pay attention to staff morale, and provide feedback will be better poised to implement change and achieve their goals. Effective leaders set roles, goals and expectations for each individual staff member and for the dental department as a whole. Performance in meeting goals is monitored and good leaders acknowledge both positive and poor performance. Positive performance is appreciated and communicated to the staff member and or team. Rewards can be either monetary such as a bonus or gift card, and they can also be non-monetary. Recognition during a staff meeting or a thank you also goes a long way as long as people are noticed for doing a great job!

Poor performance needs to be addressed followed by an action plan for improvement. First, it is important to give the staff member a chance to improve. For example, if the staff member's skills are lacking and they don't know how to do their job, then providing them with additional training would be appropriate. The best in class dental programs have a formal orientation process followed by job shadowing then periodic reviews and check in as needed. If the staff member is confused around what needs to be done you can provide them with checklists and procedure manuals. In addition each staff member must be provided with a complete, up to date and accurate job description. There are also circumstances when staff does not have what they need to do their jobs. In this case determine what they need and, if at all possible, give it to them-within reason! The bottom line good performers need to be consistently recognized and rewarded, mediocre performers need to be coached, motivated and supported to do better and poor performers need to be given the opportunity to step up, and if that doesn't happen, it might be time to find a replacement. Here are some additional tips to motivate staff and create a dynamic team:

- Involve staff in the development of program goals
- Regularly share progress in meeting goals with all staff
- Involve staff in the development of strategies to resolve challenges to meeting program goals
- Reward staff for meeting program goals (bonuses, incentives)
- Recognize individual contributions to the team
- Take the time to celebrate your great team!
- Foster open and direct two-way communication- empower staff to speak directly with each other and you; be willing to accept their feedback without getting defensive
- Morning huddles for the entire dental staff (front desk and clinical staff)
- Regular (monthly) staff meetings-block out the patient schedule, not over lunch (e.g., 4-5 p.m., 1-2 p.m.)
- Create an agenda for each staff meeting and include a review of dental program performance
- Take and share meeting minutes with staff who couldn't attend

Use your enhanced understanding of your staff to develop management strategies for each individual staff person.