Combating the Physician Shortage

Physician-recruiting Programs Must Be Properly Developed — And Managed

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Almost anyone who has sought medical services in Western Mass. lately can attest in many instances to waiting months for even the most routine appointments. While this can, to a certain degree, be attributed to the desirability of the particular physician, it is more often than not due to the general shortage of doctors in our region. Organizations such as the Massachusetts Medical Society, which keeps a close eye on the physician labor market, have long since identified a severe and critical shortage in the Massachusetts physician labor market, and the situation is predicted to worsen in Massachusetts over the next 20 years.

Fingers are often pointed at the legal community with its naturally litigious nature as one reason why physicians are dissuaded from practicing in the state. Like any good marketing campaign, your efforts should employ a variety of tactics. Networking among colleagues and physician groups is one of the most effective ways to attract new physicians and obtain leads as to out-of-area candidates. Organizations frequently look outside the United States for potential candidates, or attempt to recruit foreign physicians completing programs in the United States. If you are considering such an applicant, you need to be aware of the immigration procedures necessary to put someone on your payroll.

Generally speaking, due to the physician shortage, organizations do not need to go through the extensive ‘labor certification process.’ This is the procedure in which an employer proves to federal and state authorities that there are no suitable candidates who are United States citizens or lawful permanent residents. However, although sidestepping

organization, and has personnel in place to clearly explain employee benefits to candidates.

Incentive packages are often successful tools that may be utilized in physician recruiting. Reimbursement for relocation expenses, payable if the physician stays for a predetermined amount of time, may be an attractive incentive. Another option may be a bonus, also to be paid if the physician remains for a certain period of time. A third attractive incentive is the extension, by the employer, of a low-interest loan to assist the physician’s purchase of a home by providing a down payment. These and other packages have been used successfully by many organizations.

While legal problems often arise due to questionable hiring decisions, organizations can sometimes find themselves in hot water from the outset by asking the wrong types of questions of potential employees. If your hiring staff is not familiar with the law, they are strongly encouraged to review the information provided by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) and found at its website, prior to posing what may be an improper battery of...
this lengthy procedure is an ironic benefit of the physician shortage, not all foreign candidates can be easily and quickly hired because of their individual immigration status. You should consult with an experienced immigration lawyer before making an offer to a foreign candidate.

Once you have spent the time and money to attract and hire your chosen candidate, you should monitor them during an initial two- or three-year period. Professional and, to the extent possible, personal issues that may result in their leaving the practice, should be identified and addressed.

When physician recruitment programs are properly developed and managed, organizations can achieve outstanding results. Successful programs can enable employers to recruit the desired number and quality of physicians, while retaining those physicians for years to come and perhaps avoiding costly litigation in the future due to a bad hiring decision.

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