



What to Look for in a Locum Tenens Service

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If your facility uses or is planning to use locum tenens physicians, it's important to do your research before deciding on an outside partner. Working with the wrong vendor can create more work for you, increase your stress level, and make your department less efficient. However, choosing a company whose staff is knowledgeable about the industry and your unique needs can ease your work ten-fold. A locum tenens company can offer your facility medical malpractice coverage for locum tenens physicians and supplement your existing recruitment process by finding locum tenens candidates to fill employment gaps until permanent candidates are found.

When you are deciding on a locum tenens company, five main aspects need to be examined. Of course, your decision should be made based on your organization's specific goals. The information below should serve as a helpful guideline in your decision-making process.

Company Reputation

First and foremost, your research on locum tenens companies should begin with the companies' reputations. Examine the companies' websites, look for articles or blog posts about them, and, most importantly, ask for references from both physicians and health care facilities that have worked with them. When you sign a contract with a locum tenens company, you're making a commitment to work with them for a certain period of time. Make sure that your decision is well researched and that it won't be one you'll regret.

Licensing and Credentialing

Licensing and credentialing are vital parts of the locum tenens business. Each health care organization has its own policies and procedures, so it is important to find a locum tenens company that can meet your needs. Obtaining credentials, privileges, and licensing can be time

consuming. A quality locum tenens company should assist you by completing applications, gathering necessary references, and remaining in contact with you throughout the process.

Medical Malpractice Insurance

Locum tenens companies offer one of two types of medical malpractice insurance: claims-based and occurrence-based. It is crucial to understand the differences between the two. According to the American College of Physicians (ACP) article "Malpractice Insurance," claims-based insurance protects physicians "only if the company that insured (the physician) at the time of the alleged 'occurrence' is the same company at the time the claim is filed in court."¹ If a physician switches insurers, or if a locum tenens company goes out of business or becomes unable to cover costs, between the occurrence of an alleged malpractice incident and the date a claim was made, the physician will not be covered unless he or she purchases an insurance "tail." Conversely, occurrence-based insurance covers the physician from the moment the incident occurs. ACP states, "Any malpractice occurrence will be covered by the insurance carrier, provided it was the carrier at the time of the alleged event, regardless if it is the carrier at the time the claim is filed." Since medical malpractice insurance claims are often made several years after the alleged incidents occur, claims-based coverage alone may not be adequate. Out of 56 agencies in the National Association of Locum Tenens Organizations (NALTO), PracticeMatch is only one of four that carry the more desirable occurrence-based malpractice insurance.

Quality of Physician Searches

Whether you're looking for permanent placements or locum tenens physicians, the quality of the candidates is of the utmost importance. When deciding on a locum tenens partner, think about the quality of physician candidates

available to the company (e.g., its physician database) and the quality of the company's marketing and sourcing processes. Choose a company that makes it a priority to not only fill positions but to find physicians who are good matches for your organization.

Number of contacts

In-house physician recruiters are inundated with voice mails and emails from current and potential vendors and outside companies. When choosing a locum tenens company, it is important to consider the number of contacts you will make throughout each physician search process. Is the company set up with one point of contact per client or per specialty? As an example, PracticeMatch has one point of contact for each health care facility we work with. This eliminates the need for extra voice mails and emails, makes the process less confusing, and ensures that recruiters are working only with people who know about their particular needs and organization.

References

1. *Malpractice Insurance, American College of Physicians Website*, http://www.acponline.org/residents_fellows/career_counseling/malpractice_insurance.htm

A quality locum tenens service can save you time, money, and stress when filling temporary positions for your health care organization. With dozens of companies out there, it's up to you to do your research and find the one that will meet the needs of your organization. For more information on locum tenens and other aspects of in-house physician recruitment, visit our blog at blog.practicematch.com or contact Kandace Mark at 866-425-6846 or Kandace.mark@practicematchllt.com.

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