

How to Determine the Need for Physicians

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Hospitals and medical groups nationwide face significant challenges in physician recruitment and development. An adequate supply of physicians of all types is central to the overall health and stability of a healthcare delivery system and an issue of growing concern for many communities. Physicians are a hospital's most important asset in delivering patient care and protecting income. Physicians generate valuable revenue, provide outpatient and inpatient care, and are central to a successful planning and recruiting program.

Recruiting physicians has become increasingly difficult due to:

- The significant shortages in several key specialties including primary care, medical and surgical specialties.
- Older physicians becoming at risk for retiring.
- Declining reimbursement.
- Increasing malpractice costs.
- Physicians entering the workforce are making lifestyle choices including wanting more flexible hours, the stability of a large group rather than a solo practice, wanting to be employed, and having their education debt paid.
- Recent Federal regulations limiting a hospital's ability to offer financial assistance to medical groups that want to recruit additional physicians to their practice.

Hospitals and medical groups participating in physician recruitment must commit to more detailed analysis of physician need/demand for the communities they serve in order to ensure the "optimal number and type" of physicians/providers for the future.

Community-based physician

need/demand analysis is a planning guide to meet your medical staff planning functions. There are a variety of physician demand measurements and market conditions that can impact the supply and demand for physicians. A comprehensive Community Physician Need/Demand Analysis (CPNDA) identifies current and forecasted need, gaps in various specialties, additional succession

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needs and possible new growth opportunities within a given service area. The CPNDA is also an important input document as to a hospital's strategic plan.

When preparing a Community Physician Need Demand Analysis, it is recommended that a third party prepare the documentation in order to ensure an unbiased opinion. (IRS Private Letter Advisory Guideline to Auditors, 2001).

The analysis process must:

- Meet all Regulatory and Governmental Requirements and Guidelines
- Define and Profile the Service Area
- Profile the Medical Staff and Determine Physician and Provider Supply

- Determine Need/Demand by Specialty (Quantitative)
- Adjust for Market Factors Affecting Access (Qualitative). Because of the complicated challenges, hospitals and medical groups have to be more proactive by strategically planning for their current and future physician access to care.

Once your Community Physician Need/Demand Analysis is completed, it is then possible to identify specific needs. Based on the findings, you can launch a dedicated recruitment program and target key specialties. A successful physician recruitment program requires a highly professional and competitive process. Facilities that are not prepared to participate in physician recruiting are vulner-

able and can experience dramatic shifts in market share to competitors.

Therefore, begin with a comprehensive Community Physician Need/Demand Analysis and Physician Development Plan, update the needs annually, and launch a professional and robust recruitment program.

Sandy Champion, CMSR, is president of The Champion Healthcare Consulting Group, LLC (The Champion Group), and provides comprehensive Community Physician Supply/Demand Analysis and strategic planning services to hospitals and medical groups throughout the northwest and western regions. She can be reached at championgroup42@msn.com.



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