

# Hiring Clinical Staff

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Are you looking to grow your practice? The following steps can help you find and hire candidates who are a good fit.

## Prior to Starting Your Search for Candidates

- **Determine the direction in which you want your practice to expand.** Making this decision early will help you focus on candidates that fit with your vision of the practice. Do you plan to focus on one or two specialties? Or are you looking to offer new services to a wider range of patients/clients? Depending on the focus of your expanded practice, your ideal candidate will have predominantly similar or predominantly complementary skills to your own.
- **Consider Part-Time Roles:** If you're unsure about the immediate need for a full-time role, consider hiring part-time or on a contract basis. This can provide flexibility and allow for growth as your practice's client base expands.
- **Do Your Homework in Advance:** Write up a brief job description. Be clear about your model and the amount of compensation you will offer. Also decide on relevant policies and procedures you would want any candidate to follow. This also includes defining your expectations regarding productivity, marketing, program development, on-call requirements, documentation, etc.

## Beginning Your Search for Candidates

- **Ask colleagues:** Often the best candidates come through referrals from trusted colleagues or professional networks. Contact them through your professional association listservs and social media. Network at live conferences, asking colleagues if they know anyone who might be interested in working for you.
- **Leverage Technology:** Use modern hiring tools and platforms to find suitable candidates. This includes job boards such as Indeed or ZipRecruiter, social media such as LinkedIn, and local professional associations.

- **Embrace Diversity:** Hiring professionals from diverse backgrounds can enrich the practice, offering a wider range of perspectives and experiences, which can be beneficial to clients from various backgrounds.

## Screening Candidates

- **Verify Credentials and Experience:** Ensure that the candidates have the necessary qualifications and licenses to practice in their specialty. Additionally, consider their experience in the field, especially in areas that are relevant to your practice's focus. Review their recent history of CE courses. Check references who are among your top candidates.
- **Check candidates' backgrounds:** Have they received licensing board complaints or disciplinary actions? Have they been involved in legal disputes? Have they been treated for substance abuse or mental health problems? These are not necessarily deal breakers, but should be addressed with the candidate.

## Interviewing Candidates

- **Take your time in the interview.** As you have experienced in your work with clients, it may take a while for the candidate to relax and to respond in their natural manner. Structure the interview, but be prepared for diversions, which may yield important information. Don't rush to fill in silences. Let the candidate take the lead if you think they may have more to add on a given topic.
- **Check for cultural fit.** It's important that anyone you hire aligns with the values and culture of your practice. This ensures a harmonious work environment and consistent service quality for your clients. You can assess this by asking candidates to describe a case (regardless of outcome) and to describe their strengths and weaknesses.
- **Note the candidate's communication skills.** This includes body language, eye contact and other nonverbal behaviors, as well as tone of voice, pace of speaking, and tendency (or not) to interrupt or get defensive.
- **Look for complementary skills.** When expanding your practice, consider hiring professionals who bring in skills or specialties different from your own. This can help in catering to a broader range of clients. For instance, if you specialize in cognitive behavioral therapy, you might consider someone skilled in psychodynamic therapy or a child psychologist.
- **Assess commitment to ongoing professional development.** Look for candidates who are interested in continuous learning and professional

development. This not only benefits their personal growth but also enriches your practice.

- **Get multiple sources of input.** Have highly ranked candidates come back for a second interview, and if possible, have them interview with other clinical staff. Check their online presence to see how they present themselves on social media and in therapist directories.

## Making A Job Offer

**Have a Written Employment Contract.** Memorialize the terms and conditions of employment in a written agreement. Be sure to consult with an employment lawyer who represents employers in your state, and invite the candidate to also consult with a lawyer prior to signing the agreement.

Growing a mental health practice requires careful consideration of both the professional and personal attributes of potential hires. Ensuring a good fit for your practice's culture, values, and client needs is essential for long-term success.

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