



6

TIPS

to Improve Your
Orientation for
Locum Tenens
Physicians

The orientation process is one of the most valuable aspects for a locum tenens physician starting an assignment at your facility. Whether the job lasts for a few days or a few months, the first day is vital to the effectiveness of your new locum tenens physician. Every facility differs in size, environment, staff, requirements and regulations. The following six tips can help you maximize the productivity of your locum tenens physicians by ensuring they are effectively oriented to your facility, staff, policies and procedures.

1

Complete logistics ahead of time

Instead of spending a full day filling out paperwork for human resources and learning about the facility, most locum tenens physicians prefer to get as much taken care of as possible before stepping foot in the building. The first day is hectic with a tremendous amount of information and training to take in all at once. By allowing the physician to fill out paperwork in advance, he or she will be able to devote more attention and time to the hands-on training and hit the ground running much sooner, making your investment in this physician more cost-effective.

One physician describes how his stress level is reduced when he completes some of the required tasks before starting the job. "Anything that can be done ahead of time is much preferable. You have to remember what a really tough first day it is. I have to check into a hotel the night before, use a map to get to the facility, wander around to find someone and have to learn how 'things work' at the place. Anything that can happen ahead of time would be great."

2

Provide reliable contacts

Often, physicians can be apprehensive or expect to be overwhelmed of the first day at a job in a new location. Connecting with a knowledgeable person from the facility is a great way to lessen anxiety and answer questions. Establishing a good relationship ahead of time ensures the physician will be more at ease and prepared.

It is imperative that this contact person is ready to meet the physician as soon as he or she arrives at the facility. There are, unfortunately, many instances of physicians having to track someone down to tell

them where to go and with whom they should speak. Be sure that your point-of-contact is aware of the time and location they are to meet the new physician.

In addition to a main point of contact, consider providing a back-up contact. This ensures the physician's time on the first day is not wasted, which enables him or her to be more cost-effective for your needs.

3 **Minimize surprises on the first day**

If there are certain requirements for the locum tenens physician to complete in the office, whether it be paperwork or labs, make sure to give a heads-up. It's understandable some things can't be done ahead of time, but it's always best to give advanced notice if there are more HR requirements, especially if it involves a physical or blood draw. "The most stressful thing is to have a tough start at a new place and get 'surprise tasks' such as training, paperwork, physicals, etc.," remarks one physician.

The first day of a locum tenens assignment can be quite overwhelming for a doctor in an unfamiliar environment with new rules and equipment. Allow the physician to step through the doors knowing his or her schedule and requirements for the day. He will be appreciative and better prepared to get to work.

4 **Keep orientation short, yet effective**

The length of orientation for locum tenens physicians varies tremendously between every facility. Generally, most orientation sessions last between half a day to two full days. While most physicians would prefer a short orientation period, it's in everyone's best interest to ensure that introductions and training take place. Some physicians expect an extensive tour of the hospital or facility, especially if their job will necessitate the ability to rush to an unexpected part of the building at a moment's notice, such as an operating room, emergency department or delivery room. On the other hand, you will have some physicians who only want a short tour, and are only interested in seeing the parts of the hospital where they will actually be practicing. Make sure you show your locum tenens physician every place in the facility of which he definitely needs to be aware, but don't give him a tour of

the entire building if you don't think it is necessary. You might find it helpful to understand the physician's preferences beforehand to save you both time.

Often physicians enjoy completing the orientation early enough in the day so they can then shadow another physician later in the afternoon, and then learn how the dictation, EMR or billing procedures take place.

One psychiatrist explains his personal preference:

“My ideal situation is to have a good orientation and to be able to work the rest of the day without a lot of responsibility. This depends on the facility, of course. If I know the EMR, then it isn't too big a deal, but if it's an unfamiliar and complicated one, the best situation is to have the training in the morning and then just do the basics in the afternoon. For psychiatry, I like to only see one patient and do one note, billing, etc. that afternoon, and to have time to shadow another physician and see how they do orders, document the history and physical, the legal, do a discharge, etc. Then, I'm all set the next day.”

It's also imperative that you give a complete run-through of your specific policies and procedures. Each healthcare organization has different regulations, so make sure the physician is fully aware of the details of yours. Neither of you will want to find out later that he or she missed an important policy that could have been covered in orientation on the first day.

Some facilities require longer orientation periods for essential reasons, but there is always a chance some parts of the orientation could be unnecessary or able to be completed before the first day. The sooner the locum tenens physician is finished with the assigned orientation and training, the sooner he or she can start serving your needs as well as your patients'.

5 Consider maps of your facility

Locum tenens physicians almost always receive directions to their facilities from their hotels or residences, but it could also be beneficial to offer maps of the actual building(s). Obviously this would not be necessary for smaller clinics or private practices, but it could be useful in larger settings.

6 Don't forget equipment orientation

It is important to make sure physicians have as much detail as possible about all of the equipment and software they will encounter. Many physicians complete the first day of orientation and then find they have no idea where their lockers or pagers are located. Similarly, a locum tenens physician may not be familiar with certain EHR software, or may know it well but doesn't realize access to the database has not been granted until seeing a patient, which can "become a nightmare," according to one doctor. Most facilities offer the new physician a tour of the facility, but sometimes important locations or vital information may be skimmed over or accidentally skipped, especially in chaotic and busy environments.

It's often helpful to have a checklist of items to run through with the physician on the first day. That way there will be fewer questions and little confusion later when the staff or physician is busy. On the following page, you will find some common issues locum tenens physicians run across in the first few days.

If there are any other tools or pieces of equipment that might be essential to the physician's job at your facility, please do not hesitate to bring it up on the first day while running through your checklist.

Orientation Checklist

✓	Item	Details
	Point of Contact for the First Day	Does the physician know who to ask for and where to go upon arrival?
	ID Badge	Has an ID badge already been requested and activated so the physician can access needed areas of the facility?
	EHR Access	Does the physician know which EHR system you are using at your facility? If he/she is unfamiliar, do you provide training or a cheat sheet to help?
	Locker Locations	Has the physician been assigned a locker or other space to keep and store personal items?
	Dictation System Access	Does the physician know which dictation system your facility uses? Are there instructions available if he/she is unfamiliar with it?
	Map of Facility	Has the physician been provided a map with important areas highlighted, including clinical areas, break rooms and locations where meetings are held?
	Computer Desk/ Availability	Does the physician know where a computer station is located where he/she can enter notes?
	Pagers/Keys	Will the physician be issued keys or a pager while working at the facility?
	Timesheets	Does the physician know who will be approving their weekly timesheets?

Following these tips can help you achieve better success by ensuring your locum tenens physician is fully prepared with your facility's needs and expectations. A well-oriented physician will be ready to work and be a tremendous asset to your healthcare strategy.