

Exclusive Member Web Site Now Available

Online Resource for Office Managers Now Features Password-Protected Section

The Saint Barnabas Office Managers Association Web site— which debuted last spring on the Internet at www.sbofficemanagers.com — now offers an exclusive member-only resource site

Dedicated to helping office managers in a host of practice management areas, the Members Area offers a host of resources made available through a secured link, including downloadable forms and education and training. Currently featured on the site under education and training are “Success in Five,” a five-minute training solution allowing managers to share important customer-service-based training tips with their staff quickly and concisely during group meetings, and “Telephone Etiquette,” training materials for proper telephone etiquette while handling calls.

To learn more about the Web site or inquire about a user name or password, visit www.sbofficemanagers.com and click on the “Contact Us” link.

Ask the Practice Management Experts *continued*

Sandy: I have a mature office staff with a very good, old-fashioned work ethic. I try to show them they are always appreciated. For example, when a physician is on vacation, I will often give my employees extra time off. For our own mental health, that works out well, as we are a very busy practice, and we are going every minute of the day. I also brag about my staff whenever possible. Having the right frame of mind makes it all worthwhile, because the days are long, but knowing that we are helping our patients through difficult times and we are appreciated for what we do makes it all worthwhile.



Reminder:

Human Resource Programs on Tap

Friday, September 19, 11 a.m.

Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center and Saint Barnabas and Newark Beth Israel Medical Centers
Thursday, September 25, 8:30 a.m.
Community, Kimball and Monmouth Medical Centers

Friday, September 26, 11 a.m.

Clara Maass Medical Center

Call 888.724.7123, prompt 1, to register or learn more about these programs.



BEST Practice

A Publication for Saint Barnabas Health Care System Physicians' Office Administrators and Staff

'Go-Green' Strategies for Office Managers

Going green in the business setting is a great way for office managers to help reduce overall environmental impact and promote environmental stewardship. In this second in a two-part series, we look at some more ways that a greener workplace can mean a lighter ecological footprint, a healthier and more productive place to work, and good news for the bottom line.

Here are some practical steps that can lay the groundwork for a healthy, low-impact workspace.

More Work, Less Energy

For many people, a computer is the central tool at work. Optimizing the energy settings for computers and other devices can be more than a modest energy saver. Set computers to energy-saving settings and make sure to shut them down when you leave for the day (“standby” settings will continue to draw power even when not in use). By plugging hardware into a power strip with an on/off switch (or a smart power strip), the whole desktop setup can be turned off at once (make sure to power down inkjet printers before turning it off—they need to seal their cartridges).

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Highmark to Take Over Medicare Claims This Fall

This fall marks a key transition of the Medicare fee-for-service program to Highmark Medicare Services, which will handle claims from New Jersey hospitals, physicians and other health care practitioners.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) selected Highmark Medicare Services Inc. last fall as the new Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) for handling both Medicare Part A and Part B fee-for-service claims and other administrative activities. Highmark, which began processing Medicare Part A claims in New Jersey on September 1, will take on the state's Part B claims on November 14.

In October 2007, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services awarded Highmark Medicare Services the Jurisdiction 12 (J12) Medicare contract to provide the Medicare Fee-for-Service Part A and Part B administrative services for New Jersey, as well as Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia. The award is part of a Congressional requirement to replace all current Medicare Part A and B contracts with new contract entities called Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs).

As a MAC, Highmark Medicare Services will serve as a single point-of-contact entity processing Medicare Part A and B claims from hospitals and other institutional providers, physicians and other practitioners within the J12 region.

"As this work transitions from other contractors to Highmark Medicare Services, we are committed to making this as seamless as possible for Medicare beneficiaries and health care providers," says Patrick Kiley, president of Highmark Medicare Services. "We understand that one of the keys to accomplishing this is through timely and

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Save the Date:

Saint Barnabas Office Managers Association
First-Year Anniversary Celebration
Wednesday, November 12 ♦ 4 to 8 p.m.
Woodbridge Hilton

Featuring nationally known motivational speaker and best-selling author
Stephanie Marston, a "Work/Life Balance Expert"

- ♦ **Shari Belme** 732.914.3805
Saint Barnabas Behavioral Health
- ♦ **Lauren Burke** 973.926.2632
Cardiovascular Services
- ♦ **Judy Webster** 973.322.7345
Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center
- ♦ **Jean Flaherty** 732.557.2296
Audrey Petersen 732.557.3940
Community Medical Center
- ♦ **Fran Monteleone** 973.450.2997
Clara Maass Medical Center
- ♦ **Eileen VandeBunte** 732.923.7535
Monmouth Medical Center
- ♦ **Alyssa Ruby-Mako** 732.557.7168
Kimball Medical Center
- ♦ **Lydia Spingler** 973.322.2827
Saint Barnabas Medical Center
- ♦ **Patricia Gillen** 973.926.5534
Newark Beth Israel Medical Center

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A Legacy of Excellence



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HIPAA Q&A

Q: May physician offices use patient sign-in sheets or call out the names of patients in waiting rooms?

A: Yes. Covered entities, such as physician's office, may use patient sign-in sheets or call out the names of patients in waiting rooms as long as the information disclosed is appropriately limited. The HIPAA Privacy Rule explicitly permits the incidental disclosures that may result from this practice, for example, when other patients in a waiting room hear the identity of the person whose name is called, or see other patient names on a sign-in sheet. However, these incidental disclosures are permitted only when the covered entity has implemented reasonable safeguards and the minimum necessary standard, where appropriate. For example, the sign-in sheet may not display medical information that is not necessary for the purpose of signing in (i.e. the medical problem for which the patient is seeing the physician).

To learn more, visit the CMS Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov.

Due Diligence Required When Outsourcing Payroll

A professional payroll service can save your medical practice time and money, as payroll rules are complicated, due dates can be tricky, significant cash transfers are involved, and your staff has other important responsibilities.

Most outside payroll services are ethical and operate in a totally above-board manner, but the occasional bad egg serves as a reminder that you must do your homework before turning over such a vital portion of your financial responsibilities to an outsider.

Highmark *continued from page 1*

direct communications by the MAC and timely response by those who need to react to changes due to the transition."

CMS required each provider currently enrolled for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) with an outgoing contractor to complete a new EFT Agreement with Highmark Medicare Services using the standard CMS-588 Form by August 8. This form is a legal agreement between providers and the Medicare contractor, which allows funds to be deposited into your bank account.

A new agreement must be processed by Highmark Medicare Services before any payments are issued. Failure to complete and submit a CMS-588 Form will result in a delay or interruption of your Medicare payments upon transition.

Office staff with questions related to the transition or Highmark Medicare Services can visit www.highmarkmedicare.com to learn more. Additionally, office managers can visit the Web site to subscribe to Highmark's J12 Mac e-mail list to receive important news, events, deadlines and general information regarding the transition.

New Contact Information for Highmark Medicare Services

Provider Inquiry 877-235-8048

EDI Helpdesk 866-488-0546

Provider Enrollment Helpdesk 866-488-0549

New Post Office Box:

Highmark Medicare Services

Attn: (Dept/Function or Person)

P.O. Box 890420

Camp Hill, Pa., 17089-0420

"Go-Green" *continued from page 1*

Printers, scanners, and other peripherals that are only used occasionally can be unplugged until they're needed. And of course, turn off lights in spaces that are unoccupied.

Use Green Materials

Some paper use can't be avoided, so use recycled paper and envelopes that have been processed and colored using eco-friendly methods. Pens and pencils can also be made of recycled materials, and refillable pens and markers are preferable to disposable ones. Use biodegradable soaps and recycled paper or cloth towels in the bathroom and kitchen, and provide biodegradable cleaners for the custodial staff. Buy in bulk so that shipping and packaging waste are reduced, and reuse the shipping boxes. Recycling printer cartridges is often free, and recycled replacements are cheaper than new ones.

Get Others in on the Act

Share these tips with your office staff. Make sure everyone has a small recycling bin so that recycling is just as easy as throwing paper away. Ask everyone to bring in a mug or glass from home and keep some handy for visitors so that you reduce or eliminate use of paper cups.

Did You Know?

According to a recent national survey, only a fraction of American physician practices are making the switch to electronic health records, with most citing cost as the biggest obstacle in shifting from conventional paper to electronic medical records.

Our Experts:



Sandy Handler is office manager for Professional Associates in Surgery, a practice comprising general surgeons Stephen Feldman, M.D., Patrick Chang, M.D., and Vivek Maheshwari, M.D. She oversees an office staff of five.



Helen Pollicove manages Wee Care Pediatrics' office practice for Harvey Hirsch, M.D., and Moshe Levy, M.D., and oversees an office staff of eight nurses and six receptionists. **Have a practice management question? Ask an expert! Call us at 1-888-724-7123, and press 1.**

Ask the Practice Management Experts

"Ask the Experts" is a question-and-answer forum featuring leading practice management experts. In this issue of Best Practice, we ask Sandy Handler, office manager for Professional Associates in Surgery, West Orange, and Helen Pollicove, office manager for Wee Care Pediatrics, Manalapan, to share tips on keeping a balance among patient, employee and physician satisfaction.

What do you and/or your physician(s) do to maintain a positive office environment?

Sandy: I've worked in this practice for more than 20 years, and when I came here was a very high standard already in place. We work as a team, and we have longevity with our staff, as we all enjoy working here. Our physicians are excellent role models, and their dedication to their patients inspires us. Our No. 1 goal is to accommodate the patient. It is a busy place to work, and we like to do the little things — like bringing in bagels or pastries and celebrating birthdays. I reinforce that by telling the staff we appreciate what they do. I'm very lucky to have a staff that's very dedicated. Our motto is we treat patients the way we want to be treated, which goes a very long way.

Helen: The key word that comes to mind is flexibility. I'm a nurse, and when my children were young, I worked in a hospital where they couldn't call the nurses station even if they got sick at school. We have working moms here, and they know that if their child gets sick at school, they can go and we'll cover for them. No one takes advantage of that flexibility — they know that all of our families come first. This gives everyone a very secure feeling, because they know that their jobs are not in jeopardy if their kids get sick. Also, the doctors are very generous to their staff, often buying lunch for everyone, for example. This all helps create a positive work environment.

What are some challenges in this area?

Helen: As a pediatric practice, we deal with the parents, and when they call, there is nothing more important to them than having the child seen immediately. That's understandable, and we try to accommodate them, but that can be difficult when calls come in at 8 p.m. when we're all walking out the door for the day. It used to be that we fit patients in to the doctors' schedule, but in today's health care environment, we find we must fit into the parents' schedules. We always stress that nothing is more important to a parent than having a sick child seen by a doctor, and we try to understand their situation, but with most families having two working parents, this can be a real challenge.

How do you handle an unhappy patient?

Sandy: When my staff is having difficulty handling unhappy patients, I will take over. I let the patients air their grievances and empathize, which provides the staff member with much-needed support.

What tips would you suggest to other managers on how to keep a high level of employee satisfaction in the office?

Helen: I also hold 15-minute one-on-one meetings twice a year with each staff member where I ask them — How can we make the practice better? They have invaluable insight, as I'm stuck in my office much of the day, and they are on the front lines. And I get amazing suggestions — ideas to improve everything from filing to booking. It really works. One time a staff member asked if we could get a little filing box for notes and prescriptions because at the front desk, they had notes and papers all over the place. It's little things like cleaning up clutter that makes the work environment better and less stressful that can make a big difference. The office staff here feels a part of the success of the practice.

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