



# Physician's Guide to Credentialing

## INITIAL CREDENTIALING: TOP 10 TIPS

- 1 CHOOSE YOUR FACILITIES WISELY** – A decision to apply to a facility should not be undertaken lightly. Once you are on staff, you are subject to peer review. While legal immunities and privileges protect the facility, you have little if any protection and your record may be permanently affected.
- 2 DETERMINE WHETHER THE FACILITY NEEDS YOU** – If you are unfamiliar with the health care entity, research whether you are needed (e.g., you will be bringing in new business or providing needed call coverage). If you are expendable or a competitive threat, you may be vulnerable.
- 3 DETERMINE IF MEDICAL STAFF LEADERSHIP WANTS YOU** – You must have support from those in power when you are new to a facility. Whether it is your practice partners or physicians who know and respect you, be sure to have some allies in power on the medical staff.
- 4 TAKE THE APPLICATION PROCESS SERIOUSLY** – You are the one responsible for the contents of the application. Although a staff person may assist, you must personally review it and all attachments, verify its accuracy, and sign it.
- 5 READ ALL QUESTIONS CAREFULLY AND ANSWER ACCURATELY** – While standard forms provide uniform questions, be especially aware of addendum questions, which are designed to elicit even minor peer review events.
- 6 VERIFY THE ANSWER IS "NO" BEFORE YOU CHECK THAT BOX** – An allegation of dishonesty or fraud is independently reportable to third parties, including state licensing boards and the federal data bank (NPDB). Better to fully disclose than to be accused of misrepresenting yourself.
- 7 IF A "YES" ANSWER IS NECESSARY, GIVE A FULL EXPLANATION** – Providing a credible explanation is crucial. If the answer is unclear, an attorney versed in this area can craft an answer that is accurate. If you write it yourself, be sure an impartial third party reviews it.
- 8 DON'T HIDE FROM AN INACCURATE ANSWER** – In the event a facility questions the accuracy of an answer, provide a full explanation of not only the accurate answer (now that you understand the question) but your reasons for the initial answer. An attorney versed in this area can help undo what otherwise could be real damage to your record.
- 9 IF PRIVILEGES WILL NOT BE GRANTED, CONSIDER WITHDRAWING YOUR APPLICATION** – If the facility actually rejects you, it will report the rejection to the state licensing board and the federal data bank (NPDB). Some facilities will allow withdrawal before rejection as a courtesy, but not always. Monitor the process with vigilance.
- 10 REMAIN ATTENTIVE TO THE ATMOSPHERE** – Once on staff, be alert to warning signals that you are not welcome. If they exist, determine how to deal with them before they become a problem.

## REAPPOINTMENT: TOP 10 TIPS

- 1 DO YOU REALLY NEED TO MAINTAIN PRIVILEGES?** – Do you use the facility on a regular basis? Do your patients need access to this facility? If not and you have access to other facilities, consider whether you really want to maintain privileges there.
- 2 READ ALL QUESTIONS CAREFULLY AS THEY MAY HAVE CHANGED** – Some facilities attempt to elicit more information by adding or changing questions. Before assuming the same answer, re-read it carefully and ensure your answer is accurate.
- 3 DON'T RELY ON YOUR STAFF TOO MUCH** – Don't fall into the habit of allowing a staff person to complete the applications and submit them, with you merely providing your signature.
- 4 TAKE THE REAPPLICATION PROCESS SERIOUSLY** – As with initial application, a staff person can draft the answers, gather the attachments, and actually submit the reapplication. But the physician must make sure that the application is wholly accurate and complete before signing. Don't allow staff to use a signature stamp!
- 5 RECOGNIZE WARNING SIGNALS** – Typically, you will be required to recredential every two years. If a facility notifies you that your recredentialing will be required on a more frequent basis, you may have issues. Other warning signals include conditions for reappointment such as CME classes, anger management classes, and being placed on probation or proctorship.
- 6 DON'T IGNORE WARNING SIGNALS** – If you believe that something is awry, don't ignore the problems. Make inquiry to find out if there is an investigation. An attorney versed in this area can help you communicate with the facility and determine how any issues can be addressed.
- 7 DON'T RESIGN OR FAIL TO REAPPLY IF YOU SUSPECT AN INVESTIGATION** – There is no requirement that a physician be notified of an "investigation" for one to exist. It is crucial to confirm your status before you resign or let your privileges lapse by failing to reapply, which will trigger a negative report to the state licensing board and the federal data bank (NPDB). An attorney's help to resolve the matter is well worth the limited expense.
- 8 INFORM FACILITY OF ANY CHANGES** – Medical staff bylaws typically provide for corrective action in the event that the responses in your application are or become materially false or inaccurate. You have a continuing duty to make sure that the information you have provided is updated and valid.
- 9 REAPPLY WELL IN ADVANCE** – Don't wait until the last minute. Complete your reapplication in plenty of time so that any issues can be resolved before the facility makes any final decisions.
- 10 KEEP INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL** – All credentialing information is subject to privilege and confidentiality protections, so keep it private.



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