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Special Report

A Code of Conduct Improves Behavior

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Professional Behavior

One would think that everyone's definition of "professional behavior" would be about the same. Unfortunately, this is not the case for some physicians. Problematic physician behavior can range from criticizing other physicians in front of employees to striking a patient.

Unfortunately, most medical groups have a hard time addressing such situations. If the group has never agreed upon a set of expected behaviors, physicians in the group resist challenging other physicians about their inappropriate behavior.

Code of Conduct

One way to address this situation is for the group to develop a "Code of Conduct."

A Code of Conduct indicates the agreed upon standards of behavior expected of a member of the group. It sets out, in general terms, the standards and duties which it is reasonable to expect a member of the group to observe.

Properly developed, this document can be used to effectively reign in problematic physician behavior. Everyone has fair warning about what the agreed upon expectations are. Toleration for outliers is reduced. Group leadership can act because an intervention is no longer seen as one person's opinion versus another's.



What Should Be Included?

What should a Code of Conduct address?

We think that the group should set expectations in a number of areas, to include:

1. Relations/interactions between group physicians.
2. Relations/interactions with group employees.
3. Relations/interactions with those outside the group.
4. Patients and patient care.
5. Participation in practice management responsibilities.
6. Confidentiality of practice information.
7. Support of group decisions, established goals and policies.

For each area the group should answer the following questions:

1. What behaviors do we expect of each other? What is acceptable to us? What is inappropriate?
2. What are some of the “unwritten rules” that guide our behavior?
3. What are the rights and responsibilities of each physician?

As you might expect, our knowledge in this area is based on the fact that Latham Consulting Group has substantial experience in assisting medical groups with improving their governance through our **Governance and Conflict Resolution Services**.



If we can provide assistance or answer any questions you might have, please contact us at 704/365-8889 or e-mail us at wlatham@lathamconsulting.com.