

Coaching for Health Care Institutions

Although executive coaching is commonly adopted in corporate environments, physician coaching in health care is new. However, its use in health care is beginning to increase.

There are critical factors to consider when implementing a coaching program for physicians exhibiting disruptive behaviors. Ideally, **hospital policies** are in place to address what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, reporting mechanisms, and non-retaliation clauses. In addition, the hospital's stance on dealing with "special cases," such as; whistles blowers, high admitters, or highly regarded specialists needs to be clearly understood by all.

Determining a **measurement of success** is important. Success indicators could be employee retention, improved performance, higher patient satisfaction ratings, increased harmony, higher morale and engagement.

A process **for making referrals** must be established. I recommend the hospital to refer as early as possible rather than allow problems to mount up. The person making the referral can expect resistance from the physician; therefore creating a safe emotional environment will help. So will educating the physician, that coaching is a non-medical, non-punitive approach (many times it is a perk) that will focus on strengths and improving performance. Making a referral demonstrates the hospital values a physician enough to make substantial efforts to keep them.

Feedback loops need to be established. I recommend monthly coaching progress reports to the hospital and periodic check-ins by the hospital with the client and their supervisor. You can expect progress to be like an upward spiral, with gradual improvement and possible occasional setbacks. If the client has a major setback, a meeting with the hospital, client, and coach is optimal. When the meeting is held as soon as possible after the fact, setbacks are actually ideal learning opportunities.

The hospital, client, and coach relationship

It is critical to the process that a supportive and safe emotional environment be established, where confidentiality is respected and honored by all involved. This is especially important between coach and client. The client must feel that the coach represents them, not just the hospital. The client must be able trust the coach and must feel that he or she can openly talk about highly personal matters without fearing that information will be shared with the hospital.

It is important for the hospital to ask about positive changes the physician is making and to ask what they need to reinforce their new learning. The physician's supervisor may need to be educated about the importance of maintaining confidentiality, creating a

supportive environment, understanding learning will take time, and the importance of periodically asking about positive changes they are making. The supervisor will maximize and encourage the physician's continued growth by keep focused on the future, not the past as well as by recognizing and acknowledging positive changes.

If you would like to learn more about how coaching can help your organization, please contact me, Sara Miller, at 517 292-1261.

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