

Oral Surgery Coding & Reimbursement Alert

Reader Question: Looking to Hire a Locum? Here's How You Can

Question: We have a physician that is taking a six-month sabbatical soon, and we need to hire a locum tenens to substitute for her. Could you give me some tips on how to find a good substitute physician?

Michigan Subscriber

Answer: When one of your physicians takes extended leave, you can hire a locum tenens physician to take the absent physician's place. You might also hire a locum to fill in for physician assistants (PAs), nurse practitioners (NPs), or certain other providers.

There are a number of companies that can help you connect to a locum provider in your area. A simple website search will turn up several links that can take you to staffing specialists who could give you leads on local locum physicians. Likewise, your physician's national specialty society may help you find a locums tenens agency in your area

The challenge, however, is finding a provider that matches your practice's needs.

When you are searching for a locum provider, you typically won't have much direct contact with the person you actually end up hiring; you'll deal mostly with the staffing agency that handles the locum's assignments, so choose the staffing agency carefully.

When you contact the staffing agency, make sure you have some basic information ready, such as:

- What type of provider you need (FP, PA, etc.);
- Which specialty you need a locum for (general practice, cardiology, family medicine, etc.);
- The exact time frame you'll employ the locum; and
- The compensation you'll offer for the locum (this doesn't have to be an exact amount; a pay range is acceptable).

You'll also want to be sure to lay out expectations for the locum provider when you deal with the staffing agency, so there aren't any surprises when the locum reports for work.

Example: Check out this partial job description from an online ad for a locum physician:

"The physician is expected to:

- practice in accordance within accepted professional standards, organizational values, and with a commitment to excellent customer service;
- demonstrate respect for patients and family while administering care;
- maintain confidentiality of patient information; and
- meet or exceed all current applicable standards of the Joint Commission Accreditation of Health Care Organization.