

What a Prospective Associate Needs to Know About a Practice He/She is Joining

Obviously all of these questions will not be asked during the initial interview. However, this is the type of information an associate should ask and the senior doctor should be prepared to answer as the interviewing process and negotiations proceed, before a final associateship contract is signed.

Review for me the main characteristics you are searching for in an associate.

Describe your practice:

- Age
- Location(s)
- Number of doctors
- Number of staff
- Distribution of staff Business: Clinical:
- Number of operatories
- Any additional equipment to be added for an associate?
- Number of days/week worked
- Office hours
- Plans for expanding hours?
- Adequate parking?
- Number of phone lines?
- Computerized?
- Incorporated?

Will the current staff remain employed and can they support another doctor or will more staff be added?

How willing will current staff be to work with a new dentist?

Will an additional hygienist have to be hired? Is there room for him/her or will more equipment have to be added?

Is the entering associate to absorb patient overflow or build his/her own patient base?

Will I get to see/treat new patients as well as patients appointed for restorative and recare? If not, do you have a time frame in mind when I can treat the full scope of patients?

What is the approximate number of active patients (seen within the previous two years in general practice, within the last eighteen months in pediatric dental practice)?

What is the average number of new patients per month coming into the practice?

What is an average number of treatment (restorative or ortho) and recare (hygiene) patients seen monthly?

Outline the mix of services offered in the practice. Which services are consistently referred to another office?

How many patients per month leave the practice?

How often are charts purged?

What kind of marketing (education) efforts are being made to build the practice?

What is your primary referral source?

Describe your recare system.

What percentage of the practice is insurance? Do you wait on insurance assignment?

How is insurance processed? What happens to insurance claims that are not paid within four to six weeks?

Are collections a problem?

What is the collection percentage rate? (Collection percentage rate is calculated by dividing collections for a given period by production for the same period.)

Do you treat Medicaid (Title XIX)? If so, what percentage? Will the new associate be expected to absorb all Medicaid patients?

Do you participate in managed care programs? Describe briefly.

How frequently are fees reviewed?

What is the general profile of the patient load? If this is a pediatric dental practice, are there enough young patients to assure the practice has not aged out?

How much vacation do you take?

How many c.e. courses do you attend yearly?

Describe your work pace and schedule.

Have you had an associate before?

Will there be a large up-front cost outlay for the entering associate?

What expenses will the entering associate be expected to pay?

Will the associate be salaried or receive a percent of his/her collections? (production?)

How long before a buy-in situation might be offered? Do you want an associate for one year, two years or longer? Would you welcome a buy-in partner following a successful one or two year associateship?

If a buy-in is to happen in a year or two, how and when will the practice be appraised?

How would a buy-in situation be structured?

What if the association does not work? Will you want a restrictive covenant and if so, under what conditions?

What is the general profile of the community? Is it growing?

What are the major employers?

What is the general climate of the dental community?

Does the local dental society meet regularly? Do you participate?

Does your accountant meet with you regularly to plan for the practice?

May I see the most recent year's income and expense statement once our negotiations are in the final stage?

What is your time frame for taking an associate?

I know I'll need your input and advice as we begin working together. Will we be able to meet regularly?