

Guiding Principles for Effective Onboarding

Key Components of an Onboarding Program

- **Administrative Orientation:** Provide as much information about the group's policies and procedures as is necessary to get new hires started while giving them the tools and contacts to answer future questions.
- **Clinical Ramp-Up:** Progressively increasing patient load responsibilities is common in onboarding programs and gives new hires time to get settled and accustomed to the group's policies and procedures.
- **Enculturation and Networking:** Give new hires space to forge relationships with each other and with existing members of the hospital medicine team. Icebreakers, one-on-one or group mentoring, and paired clinical shifts are all opportunities to help new hires begin to develop roots.

1. Onboarding is ultimately about investing in your employees for long-term gain.

An effective onboarding program is inherently valuable. The challenge is showing that value to your hospital administration by framing the potential costs as an investment in the future of your employees. The direct cost of a well-structured onboarding program is significantly less than recruiting after staff turnover.

2. Remember the human element.

Clinical training is important, but so is the personal aspect of onboarding. Onboarding is a chance to lay a strong foundation between new hires and your practice—a well-established program can help forge a lasting relationship between providers and the group. Make sure you make space to nurture these relationships.

3. Duration doesn't matter—connections do.

Onboarding programs in hospital medicine groups must be adapted to the unique culture and clinical realities of the group. Some programs are weeks long, while others take place over the course of a few days. What matters is that new hires feel tied into the group and know who to ask if they have questions.

4. Make sure the right people are at the planning table.

Your onboarding program should be run by people who know what the group needs. It is vital that the clinicians, faculty, and staff on the ground working every day are included as an integral part of the planning team. Give them the time and resources to build a program that meets your practice's needs.

5. Be open to change.

The best programs have been improved year over year to adapt and meet the specific demands of each practice. Soliciting feedback from recent hires, staff and hospital leadership through post-orientation surveys helps you benchmark your own standards and make improvements when necessary.

6. Onboarding is a first impression—both for the new hires and the existing staff.

Onboarding that is well-planned, structured and executed puts everyone's best foot forward. Ensure each person involved has defined roles and responsibilities, especially rank-and-file hospitalists. New hires should have the support to not feel overwhelmed while getting up to speed with a full clinical schedule as efficiently as possible.

7. Remember the little things matter.

Strong onboarding programs do not require the most expensive solutions. Simple things, such as a staff icebreaker or detailed facility tour, cost virtually nothing yet can have a tremendous impact in building comradery and making new hires a part of the team.