

“Billing-Specific” Hiring Interview Guidelines

This special template will help you find the right applicant.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

To Our Readers: There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to lynn@soshms.com which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.

Re: Will the Best Billing Applicant Please Stand Up?

Dear Lynn,

We are in the process of interviewing applicants for a position soon to be open in our billing department. Do you have any “billing-specific” hiring interview guidelines, templates, or advice that would be helpful to us in our search?

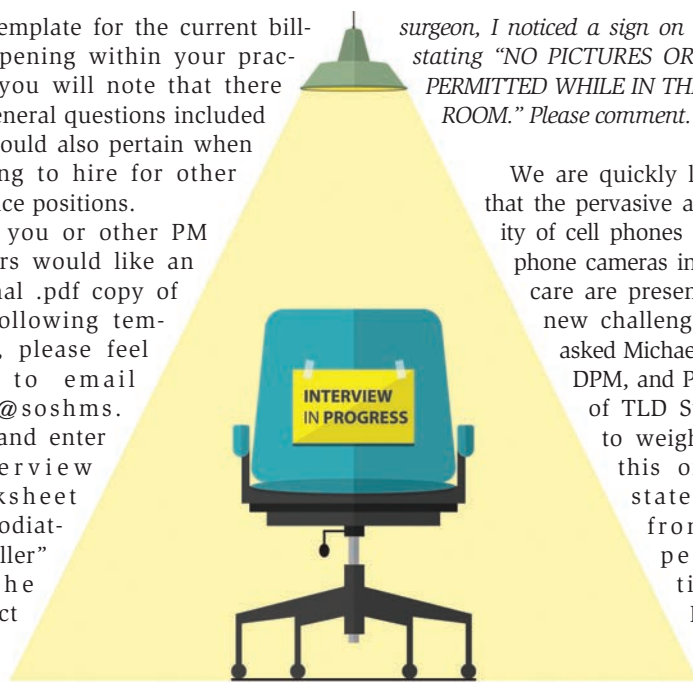
I am happy to offer a written guideline template, specifically designed for billing office personnel that will help record notes for each person you interview. This tool will encourage you to stick to a specific line of consistent questioning; a method which will allow you to assess one applicant's qualifications, skills, and personality fairly against the others. Apples to apples.

It is also a good practice to provide the applicant with a copy of the written job description at the time of the interview so they have an understanding of what the job entails from the get-go. Having this information in advance helps them identify the core responsibilities, expectations, and skills required for the position. Clarification of the job also results in less confusion, better outcomes, and an employee who is more likely to stick around.

While you are encouraged to use

this template for the current billing opening within your practice, you will note that there are general questions included that could also pertain when looking to hire for other in-office positions.

If you or other PM readers would like an original .pdf copy of the following template, please feel free to email lynn@soshms.com and enter “Interview Worksheet for Podiatric Biller” in the subject line.



surgeon, I noticed a sign on the wall stating “NO PICTURES OR VIDEO PERMITTED WHILE IN THE EXAM ROOM.” Please comment.

We are quickly learning that the pervasive availability of cell phones and cell phone cameras in health-care are presenting all new challenges. I've asked Michael Brody, DPM, and President of TLD Systems, to weigh in on this one. He states that from the perspective of HIPAA, this is

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Re: Foot Fotos

Dear Lynn,

What is the policy for malpractice and HIPAA concerning a patient taking pictures of a procedure while being performed by the doctor? We did a partial nail avulsion on a 16 year old. He took pictures on his phone during the procedure, even documenting the amount of blood. When I visited my orthopedic

a non-issue. However, from the perspective of malpractice, it is important to have copies of any and all records the patient has as part of the chart. While Dr. Brody remarked that a no-picture-policy similar to that of your orthopedic surgeon is his personal preference, he strongly advocates that if you do choose to allow it, err on the side of caution. Make sure to secure

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copies of any and all pictures that your patients take to include in their chart.

Re: When the Cat's Away...

Dear Lynn,

We recently installed security cameras, a security requirement of new building ownership. The staff were informed that the cameras are there and yet when I went to test the camera function, I could see them sitting in the front desk area, on a non-patient day, chatting (according to time stamp) for approximately 3 hours. Not initially letting on that I was aware of their inactivity during this time, I asked each for a verbal productivity status report during this observed period. Their response? "We weren't really feeling up to doing our tasks today. The doctor is out most of the week, so there is plenty of time for us to finish (our tasks) before he returns." Their insolence caught me off guard and left me furi-

ous—with them and with myself—for letting them off the hook so easily. Can you help with damage control?

First things first. You did the right thing by informing your staff that the security cameras were being installed.

leaving them with unending hours of wasted chitchat time? What appears more disturbing in addition to the time they wasted is the attitude... "We weren't really feeling up to doing our tasks today?" WHAT!?! Immediately, or

It's common to request that staff cover the phones during their doctor's absence, but at no time should the expectation be IOV, "in office vacation", while the clock is ticking.

They should have no expectations of privacy, as long as the cameras are located in public areas of your office. That would include your front desk.

Some questions come to mind. Were they given job duties that would extend over the time your doctor was absent? Or, were these tasks able to be done in half the amount of time,

sooner, they should have received clear communication or even a disciplinary action (i.e., a written or verbal warning) with each one privately to address the unacceptable attitude and lack of productivity. Hopefully, you have an employee manual that addresses improper employee behavior. It would

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Interview Guide and Worksheet for Podiatric Billing Position *Confidential*

Applicant Name _____

Date of Interview _____ **Interviewed by** _____

Potential Call back for Second Interview? No Yes **Date/Time:** _____

It is a good idea to provide a copy of the job description for which they have applied ahead of time in preparation for their interview to weed out those who fail to meet necessary criteria. During the interview, jot down your initial impressions to each question while they are still fresh in your mind. Expect that your applicant will be on their best behavior, so while LISTENING to their verbal responses, take time to also observe their non-verbal cues (body language, mannerisms, posture, pauses & hesitations).

- What do you know about our practice and why do you want to work here?

- Convince me that we need to hire you for this position? How do you feel you can contribute to this practice?

- Describe the billing work you did in your previous job. What specialty? What were your responsibilities? Tell me about your typical work week.

- What aspect of your job did you/do you find the most satisfying?

- Why did you leave (are you leaving) your last job?

- How familiar are you with Podiatry terminology; the Podiatry profession?

- Explain to me the difference between a co-pay, deductible and co-insurance.

- How does HIPAA compliance relate to the billing office?

- Describe your familiarity and experience with insurance claims.

- How do you handle denied claims? What is your appeals process and how successful are your outcomes?

- What was your biggest headache in dealing with Medicare and Medicaid claims?

- What billing reports do you feel are important to run on a daily/monthly/annual basis to benchmark collection effectiveness? Can you customize reports if requested?

- Have you ever conducted internal chart billing audits? If yes, explain the process.

- Describe your familiarity and experience with patient accounts receivable and collections?

- How comfortable are you in following up with outstanding patient accounts via a phone call?

- How familiar with the rules of the Fair Debt Collection Act? Can you share one or two with me?*
- Describe an incident you have encountered dealing with a patient disgruntled about his/her bill. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?

- How flexible can you be with your hours? Days?

- How would you say you handle criticism of your work?

- What skills do you feel are absolutely necessary to fill this position? Explain why you feel you meet these requirements.

- If I happened to run into your previous boss/manager at a party, what would he/she say about you?

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- Tell me about your short term/intermediate goals.

- We all make mistakes. Describe one of your billing mistakes and what you learned from it.

- In what ways does communication play a role when dealing with patients? Staff? Doctor(s)?

- How do you handle stressful situations?

- What motivates you to do an exceptional job?

- What salary are you seeking? Or, do you have an employment wish-list you'd like to share?

- What have you personally accomplished in your life that has made you most proud?

- What questions haven't I asked you?

Assessment:
1=Excellent, 2=Fair, 3=Needs development

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of billing protocol | <input type="checkbox"/> Communicates clearly | <input type="checkbox"/> Eager to learn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Possesses necessary skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Seems honest; Truthful | <input type="checkbox"/> Arrived on time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance & hygiene | <input type="checkbox"/> Plus Personality | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive Attitude |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional conduct; tact | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer service oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Attentive |

***A few rules of Fair Debt Collection Act**

- Do not repeatedly call your patients to annoy or harass them. While there appears to be no exact number of times patients can be called, they are free to track and document them, leaving it to the courts to decide if it is considered harassment;
- Do not call your patients before 8:00am or after 9:00pm to try to collect your money OR at a time they specify is inconvenient for them;
- If your patient has requested that you not call them at their place of business, those calls are off limits to you;
- You may only call your patient's family, neighbors, friends, co-workers to find the whereabouts of your patient (be careful, repeated calls are limited); however, you are NOT permitted to discuss their debt with them. (Along these lines, if you are asked to transfer patient records, make sure their billing records are not included);
- Do not make any false statements. Don't lie, pretend to be someone else (e.g., attorney, government representative), assume a fake company name or tell your patient they will be arrested if they don't pay their bill;
- Do not try to collect any interest, fee, or other charge on top of the amount you owe unless the contract that created your debt – or your state law – allows the charge;
- Do not deposit a post-dated check early;
- Do not contact your patient by postcard;
- Do not use obscene, violent or abusive language;
- Do not tell your patients that legal action will be taken (if doing so would be illegal) or if you have no intention of taking legal action;
- Do not send anything to your patient that looks like an official document from a court or government agency if it isn't;
- If your patient disputes a bill in writing, you must discontinue collection efforts until you can provide written verification of the debt.

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THE CONSULTANT IS IN

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be beneficial to have this section copied and handed to them—asking if they feel they were in compliance with stated policy and giving them an opportunity to correct their mindset.

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with their daily activities.**



be **IOV**, “*in office vacation*”, while the clock is ticking. There is plenty of catch up, downtime, or proactive work that can be done when patients are not scheduled and such tasks should be indicated on their written job description. As the manager, you have every right to know and follow up with their daily activities. And in fact you shoulder a responsibility to be aware of and evaluate their productivity in this regard.

It's not unusual that there is a little extra freedom when the cat is away;

for one thing, without patients, the work environment tends to be less stressful and less formal. So while it's indeed true that when the cat is away, the mice CAN play, you must be prepared to address the bigger question, **WILL they? PM**



Ms. Lynn Homisak, President of SOS Healthcare Management Solutions, carries a Certificate in Human Resource Studies from Cornell University School of Industry and Labor Relations. She is the 2010 recipient of

Podiatry Management's Lifetime Achievement Award and was inducted into the PM Hall of Fame. She is also an Editorial Advisor for Podiatry Management Magazine and is recognized nationwide as a speaker, writer, and expert in staff and human resource management.