

They didn't teach this in med school...

What You Need To Know BEFORE Accepting Your First Job

By: Erica S. Youngerman, Esq.

We have all been there... years of hard work completed, degree in hand and thrilled to have a job offer where you can finally practice the profession you have spent your entire life preparing for.

It's a very exciting time in anyone's life, let alone a physician who spent sleepless nights as a resident and may have pursued a fellowship or additional advanced degrees. BUT, before you sign on the dotted line for your first job after training, it is imperative that you stop and think about the arrangement you are agreeing to.

Too many doctors find themselves in a situation where their first job turned into not so great a fit, yet, they are trapped because of cumbersome and restrictive contract provisions, for instance, a provision allowing for high liquidated damages due to your employer should you quit before a set amount of time or a restrictive covenant that restricts you from practicing within a reasonable distance from your home. Or maybe you

were hired to assist with overflow and were to be paid on a percentage basis, but the work load does not support your anticipated salary. These, among many other potential hypotheticals, are the direct result of not taking the time to read your employment contract, ask questions and most importantly, think about the ramifications of signing as drafted.



There are many considerations prior to entering into an employment relationship; to name a few, we recommend all new physicians consider the following: (1) Where do you intend to settle? (2) How far are you willing to commute to work? (3) Are you willing to work at numerous practice locations? (4) What job responsibilities are you willing to accept? (5) What compensation are you looking for to be satisfied with your employment? (6) Are you interested in being a partner/owner? Without being able to answer the above, you will not be in a position to best evaluate potential opportunities as they arise because you will not know the type of arrangement you are looking to accept. In addition to lifestyle considerations and potentially restrictive covenants in a contract, be advised that each and every contract provision in an agreement presented to you will create a legal obligation on your part and the employer's.

It is imperative to your future success that you understand your first employment contract and agree to the terms set forth therein, which is why it is imperative that you consult with an experienced healthcare attorney, one who regularly reviews, advises and drafts employment contracts for physicians, to ensure your employment agreement adequately reflects an arrangement that is acceptable to you and offers you all necessary protections. If you are starting out your career or making an employment change, be sure that you are making an informed decision for your future by adequately reviewing your proposed employment arrangement.

About the Author

Erica S. Youngerman, Esq. focuses her practice in representing healthcare professionals with contracts, licensure, audit defense and regulatory compliance.

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