



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS ©

(Painful To Create, But Well Worth The Effort)

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Is it ok to have “cookie cutter” employment policies that don’t necessarily fit your practice? What’s wrong with just borrowing someone else’s employee handbook and distributing it to your staff as your own? Why should you spend the money to customize your policies? If you’re a small practice, do you really need a Handbook? How often should you review your policies to make sure they are legally compliant?

These are all good questions that practice owners and managers must ask themselves as they assess the effectiveness of their employee handbooks. Employee policies should be clear, concise, and reflect how you want to treat your employees. Some policies are essential and should be included in every practice’s Handbook. For instance, an Equal Employment Opportunity policy that prohibits harassment and discrimination will help assure your staff that these unlawful activities will not be tolerated while also providing an affirmative defense against complaints from disgruntled employees. However, many practices unnecessarily include policies they don’t need just because they saw them in someone else’s handbook. For instance, including information about the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) may not be necessary if your practice doesn’t have enough employees for the Act to be applicable. However, once you include it in your Handbook, it becomes your policy.

Is it better to have some policies than not to have any at all? Well, that depends. Poorly crafted employment policies, or policies that don’t reflect what you do in your particular practice, can actually do much more harm than good. Whether your practice employs 3 or 300, it’s a good idea to review your policies annually to make sure they accurately reflect the uniqueness of your practice. If you don’t have a handbook yet, what are you waiting for?