

Just How Qualified is Your Staff?

Mary E. Schmidt

President

EyeSystems Consulting

Is your staff fully qualified to care for your patients? Does your staff provide complete and accurate information? How do you know?

The first step in assuring that each of your patients receives the quality care you want is to clearly communicate your expectations to the staff.

Begin by conducting staff performance evaluations. Meet with each staff member individually to determine their strengths and weaknesses and establish personal performance goals.

The second step is to provide training and education on a regular basis. By providing training you are assured your staff is current and up to date with changes in technology, you have the ability to reinforce the performance standards and you have a system for communicating changes within the practice, you have also established a format to facilitate new behavior.

Each quarter provide a technical training program to increase the knowledge of your staff. Also provide practice management programs, such as Dealing with Difficult People or Customer Service skills. Bring in outside trainers such as vendors or consultants or send your staff to off site training and education through Optometric Associations, Vision Expos or PEN, to name a few.

The third step is to encourage your staff to become certified. This will start them on a career path and allow them to view their position as a profession instead of a job. It assures that your staff is committed to the field and is willing to expand their knowledge with a long term view of your practice and patients.

To understand just how qualified your staff is, develop a basic 10 question quiz. Some typical questions might be: Name the fitting characteristics of three different progressive lenses. Why do we perform the Visual Field test? Explain the difference between an Optometrist and an Ophthalmologist. If necessary alter the quiz to fit the direction of your practice specialty.

Administer this quiz in a written or oral format, whichever is least intimidating to the staff member. Please don't emphasize scoring 100%. Remember the goals are to understand the knowledge level of your staff, structure a training and education program and to create a positive work environment,