

Making Informed Practice Decisions:

Questions for the Dentist Considering Career Options as a Dental Associate



Dental students and new dentists, as well as established dentists, will find that there are a variety of business models in which to practice dentistry. Each business model is complex, and the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) encourages all dentists to thoroughly investigate each model before ultimately making a decision on the practice arrangement that they plan to pursue.

Dentists who are weighing their career options should consider the following questions and discuss them with prospective employers in order to gather a thorough understanding of the opportunities available.

Visit the AGD website for practice management resources.

Questions for the Dentist Considering Career Options as a Dental Associate



1. Who is my employer?

2. Who can create or edit a treatment plan? Who is responsible for the treatment plan? Do I have the authority to disagree with or change a treatment plan?

3. Who owns the dental professional entity? Who owns the business entity?

4. What is the governance structure of the dental professional entity? Of the business entity?

5. Does the business entity have a relationship with any outside investors, such as an equity firm or public company?

6. Is there a management services agreement? If so, does that agreement comply with state laws?

7. What are my employer's expectations regarding my productivity, patient volume, and revenue? For example, may I take two hours to complete a crown prep?

8. What formula is used for dentist compensation? That is, to what degree is my remuneration based on my productivity?

9. What is the relationship between my compensation and that of the business entity?

10. Who owns the lease agreements for the building? For the equipment? If I buy a practice, will I have the opportunity to own the equipment in full, or will I rent the equipment perpetually? If I can own the equipment, what is the lease term, and is there a separate agreement for a lease-to-own opportunity?

11. May I use any vendor for supplies? Is there a cap on the volume or type of supplies available?

12. May I use the dental laboratory of my choosing? How are lab costs ascertained and apportioned?

13. Who has control over revenue stream distribution, and how is the revenue stream distributed?

14. Who owns patient records? Upon termination, would I have access to patient records? If so, to what extent? Is there a procedure for accessing these records?

15. How are after-hours emergencies addressed?

16. Who makes hiring and firing decisions? Are there any protocols or guidelines for these decisions?

17. May I have access to all contracts and other documentation upon which the above answers are based, so that I may share them with an independent attorney, accountant, or professional adviser?

Important Notice

The answers to these questions should be discussed with your independent attorney or a professional familiar with dental practice modalities.

Decisions about employment, including decisions about performing work as a contractor, are strictly between the prospective employee/contractor and employer/practice.

The questions listed here are not intended to determine employment decisions. There are no preferred or correct answers to these questions.

If you have any questions or comments about this brochure, contact the AGD at practice@agd.org.

About the Academy of General Dentistry

The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) is a professional association of 38,000 general dentists dedicated to providing quality dental care and oral health education to the public. AGD members stay up-to-date in their profession through a commitment to continuing education. Founded in 1952, the AGD is the second largest dental association in the United States, and it is the only association that exclusively represents the needs and interests of general dentists. A general dentist is the primary care provider for patients of all ages and is responsible for the diagnosis, treatment, management, and overall coordination of services related to patients' oral health needs. For more information about the AGD, visit www.agd.org.

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