

5 Things Every Physician Contract Should Have

1. Time Submissions

Frequency

Specify the frequency that physicians are expected to submit your time logs (e.g., monthly).

Post-Period

Be explicit on how many days physicians have post-period close to submit time (e.g., 60 days).

Submission Requirements

Spell out clearly how the physician's time should be submitted to the organization.

2. Clear Duties

The duties in a physician's contract should be well defined and require a physician with particular skills to perform them. These duties should not be something that can be performed by a non-physician.

UNCLEAR

"Represent the hospital as needed."

CLEAR

"At the request of the hospitals, participate in community events to increase stroke awareness. Travel to and from the event is included."

3. Payment & Rate

Ensure there is a clear tie to an hourly rate and an expected number of hours with a total agreement maximum for the year. Each payment issued should be carefully checked against these terms.

UNCLEAR

"Physician will be paid \$2,000 per month."

CLEAR

"Physician will be paid \$150 per hour for work performed up to 10 hours per month."

4. Contract Term

The initial term of the contract should be for at least one year and can have auto-renewal provisions. Some agreements have what is referred to as an "evergreen," meaning it automatically renews until either party notifies the other of its intent not to renew. This provision usually requires 30 to 90 days notice after the initial term. If the contract ends, the physician should not be paid for dates outside of the contract.

5. Automate With Technology

Hospitals should consider a software platform to submit time logs in order to ensure the rules of the contract are always being followed. The Stark Law interprets any accidental error as punishable with the same severity as fraud, so it is important to have automation in place to protect both physicians and the organization for which they provide administrative duties.