

within your cancer program, you will want to do a market assessment for wages within your local area.

The Pro Forma

With information on benefits and costs you should be able to put together a pro forma showing the net revenue you expect to gain through the addition of a Financial Advocate. The pro forma should also be able to show the reduction in drug expenditures from the drug replacement program. Don't expect that one hundred percent of your patients will qualify for a PAP or drug replacement program. However, due to the high cost of drugs, it doesn't take much in the way of avoided denials and drug recovery to make up for the cost of a Financial Advocate.

Recruiting a Financial Advocate

Job Description

A key element in recruiting Financial Advocates is the creation of a specific job description that details the job's duties and skills needed and defines job performance expectations. Consider the education and experience requirements needed to recruit the specific skill sets you are seeking. For example, you may post this position as requiring a minimum of a high school diploma and two years experience with insurance claims. Or you may decide you are seeking someone with a college degree and one year of insurance experience. The type of prior experience you require will result in a specific candidate pool. By requiring specific previous experience, you're determining that your expectation is that you will not be training this individual "from the ground up," but expect that he or she will be bringing some knowledge and skills to the position. In this instance, you will then be training them for the specific needs of your program.

Consider the position's prior experience requirements carefully. Requirements that are overly specific could limit your applicant pool. For example, if your job requirements state: previous experience needed, one year experience in patient financial assistance programs required, you could be eliminating a person who has many years of insurance experience, potentially a strong candidate, but one without specific experience with financial assistance programs.

Salary and Career Advancement

Another key element for recruiting a Financial Advocate is to offer a competitive salary. Work with your Human Resources staff to understand your market area. If you can establish this role with a career ladder, the position will be even more enticing. A career ladder allows this position to have levels with different expectations and different pay ranges within those levels. Also establish when the employee will be eligible to be evaluated for a move to the next level.

Interview Process

The interview process is important in any hiring situation. It has been shown that using a peer-to-peer interview process in addition to the management interview process is beneficial. A peer-to-peer interview process brings in other employees from the cancer program who have been trained in the interview process. The employees participating in the peer-to-peer interview can ask questions and assess, from their point of view, if the applicant will be a good fit. Behavioral-based questioning is helpful in assessing how an applicant may perform in certain situations.

The Financial Advocate position requires good communication skills, knowledge of resources and programs to financially assist patients, the ability to act with sensitivity as a patient advocate, and the ability to clearly define the problems and concerns stemming from medically-related financial needs to patient and family members. In behavioral-based questioning, you will ask the applicant to give you an example of a situation in which they had to deal with a specific challenge and what the outcome was. For example, you might ask the applicant to describe a situation in which they were given a timeline to complete a project and didn't feel they had enough time to complete it. What was the project? How did they handle it? Did it get completed on time? This type of question will give you an understanding of how the applicants handled a stressful situation, what resources they turned to, and how it was resolved.

Retaining the Financial Advocate

Once you've recruited and trained the Financial Advocate, employee retention is important to realizing the benefits of this position for your patients and your cancer program. Steps for successful employee retention include:

- Providing clear financial expectations of what the position is to accomplish. Give monthly feedback to this staff on whether they are meeting the financial expectations that have been set for the position.
- Making sure the Financial Advocate knows that they are eligible to be evaluated for promotion.
- Providing the tools necessary for the Financial Advocate to perform the job. ACCC's [Patient Assistance and Reimbursement Guide](#) includes a patient assistance programs at-a-glance grid that identifies pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical programs that may be able to provide help for patients.
- Providing the Financial Advocate with a log or spreadsheet and information on what he or she is expected to track in terms of revenue achieved from reimbursement activities.

Retaining a Financial Advocate will require that the position allows for personal growth and program growth. A career ladder is one way to allow for personal growth. The career ladder can be tied to collection levels from the financial assistance program relative to the percentage of patients that were able to utilize the program.

If your newly hired Financial Advocate has no experience with financial assistance programs, but has insurance experience, an evaluation after six months is a good idea. You may want to structure your career ladder so that if the Financial Advocate has met expectations for knowledge of financial assistance programs, he or she is eligible for promotion since they meet the criteria for the next level.

Allow the Financial Advocate to research new programs or resources for the patient on a regular basis. This could mean giving them flexibility to network in the community. Give the Financial Advocate the ability to provide feedback on the programs and what they have heard from patients about the value of the program. This information needs to be shared with leadership and staff within the cancer program. Manage up this staff and the work they have done with the patients to provide financial support.

Show the Value

Showing the worth of the Financial Advocate position is important. Sometimes these positions are the first to be considered for elimination when cutbacks are needed. Collecting data so that you can measure the financial outcomes from the Financial Advocate's efforts is essential. For example, track the co-pay assistance dollars and foundation assistance dollars collected to show the actual revenue you received to help with payment of a patient's bill. If you have tracked the dates, you can also show a decrease on A/R days if you previously relied on patient payment plans. Separately track drug recovery programs that have provided free drug for patients. Identify the cost of each of the vials you received to show the reduction in cost for the drug expenditures.

Finally, communicate how the Financial Advocate program can improve patient satisfaction. Track the patients that were identified for assistance programs and the patients that were registered in PAPs. Develop a patient financial satisfaction survey and report the results of the survey.

Identify the measurement of controllable adjustments. Work on denial reports to communicate trends of adjustments. Schedule team meetings with leadership and Financial Advocates to discuss findings and create responsive planning for changes that need to be made.

Developing a financial patient satisfaction survey for patient receiving treatment can show the importance of your Financial Advocate. Create questions that are simple for the patients to answer. Do not make the survey more than a single page. Too many questions, deter the patient from responding to the survey. When developing the survey allow the option for responses to be anonymous or for the patient to sign the survey. Create a scoring system to give feedback to Patient Financial Advocates. Allow the Patient Financial Advocates to suggest revisions to the financial assistance program based on the feedback from the survey.