



Getting Started:

Directions for the New Family Physician



LOUISIANA ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

STRONG MEDICINE FOR LOUISIANA

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The New Physician Toolkit

Being a New Family Physician is a new and exciting time in your life. Finding your way in a new practice environment takes time and expertise in areas you may not be familiar with yet.

The **Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians (LAFP)** is here to supply you with information, resources and support while you begin your new practice. The New Physician Toolkit will provide you with information essential in starting a new medical practice.

The LAFP Mission

The **mission** of the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians is to promote and support Louisiana's family physicians in providing excellent health care and to provide its members with continuing medical education opportunities. LAFP serves the family medicine community and provides a **unified voice for Family Medicine**.

For more information about the benefits of membership or details on how to obtain an application for membership, please visit our website: www.lafp.org



**“I love the challenge of family medicine.
I never know what I am going to see in a given day...”**

Marguerite “Cissy” Picou, MD, FAAFP

Overview of the LAFP

Welcome to the LAFP– *Strong Medicine for Louisiana*

The Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians (LAFP) is one of the state's largest medical specialty organization, with more than 1,600 member physicians, residents and medical students throughout the state. The LAFP serves the Family Medicine community and provides a unified voice for Family Medicine.

LAFP is governed by a board of directors, comprised of LAFP members from throughout the state. The board establishes and reviews Academy policies and plans during the LAFP quarterly board meetings and the General Members Assembly Meeting. Members also serve on LAFP Committees where they study, analyze and make informed policy recommendations to the Board of Directors.

Major purposes of the Academy include:

- Advocating for family physicians to lawmakers, organized medicine and the public;
- Providing high-quality continuing medical education to physicians in Louisiana;
- Keeping members informed of changes in health care; and
- Nurturing the next generation of family physicians.

LAFP tracks and lobbies for legislation impacting family physicians and their patients. The [Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians Political Action Committee](#) (LaFamPac), the political voice of family medicine in Louisiana, speaks on behalf of Louisiana family physicians and their patients through grassroots involvement, personal relationships with elected officials and political campaign participation and contributions. LaFamPac is a non-partisan political action committee that supports candidates who support issues important to family physicians and their patients.

The Academy wishes to equip family physicians with beneficial tools for the continual improvement of the specialty. To do this, LAFP promotes the constant education of members to assist them with meeting the required 150 hours of approved continuing education every three years to retain membership. This requirement may be met through [continuing education programs](#). LAFP offers many versatile educational accredited programs throughout the year.

LAFP communicates to its members through its up-to-date website that contains information about CME activities, legislative issues, current medical news and other helpful resources. The Academy publishes a quarterly magazine, the [Louisiana Family Doctor](#), and several other smaller publications throughout the year. Members also receive the [Weekly Family Medicine Update](#), which is a weekly electronic newsletter sent every Tuesday.



Make the Most of Your Membership

Value of Membership

Being a member of the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians (LAFP) signifies your decision to identify and associate with the most knowledgeable family physicians and become a part of America's largest specialty society. As the only association that speaks solely for Family Medicine, your decision to join the LAFP/AAFP helps allow the voice of Family Medicine to be heard.

The LAFP strives to improve member benefits as well as increase them every year. We are constantly finding new partnerships to benefit you and your practice as well as increasing avenues of communication with the community.

Member Benefits:

- **CME Resources** To provide high-quality, affordable care for all people, you must maintain and continuously improve your competency in family medicine. The LAFP and AAFP offers several state of the art continuing medical education programs each year. Visit www.aafp.org/cme/reporting to access and print your CME transcript, forward your CME transcript to a third party or report your CME activities (member ID required).
- **Legislative Advocacy** Representing more than 115,900 members, the LAFP/AAFP ensures the voice of family medicine is clearly heard. LAFP tracks and lobbies for legislation impacting family physicians and their patients.
- **Practice Management Assistance** A healthy practice gives you more undivided, one on one time with your patients. The AAFP has developed programs and materials to help you streamline the management of your practice.
- **Patient Education** As a family physician, your role in treating the whole patient includes encouraging healthy lifestyles. The AAFP offers a variety of programs and materials to help you help your patients make positive changes.
- **Communications** LAFP communicates to its members through its up-to-date Web site that contains information about CME activities, legislative issues, current medical news and other helpful resources. The Academy publishes a quarterly magazine, [Louisiana Family Doctor](#), and several other smaller publications throughout the year. Members also receive [Weekly Family Medicine Update](#), an electronic newsletter.
- **Discounts** The AAFP and LAFP are constantly seeking partnerships in an effort to bring members discounts are various services.

*“More than any other organization, LAFP directly advocates on my behalf.
LAFP provides a way for us, the family doctors, to address
the issues that occur outside our exam room.”*

*-James Taylor, Jr., MD
Member since 2004*

Make the Most of Your Membership

LAFP - WORKING FOR YOU

Lean on the LAFP/AAFP to make your transition from residency run smoothly. The LAFP's sole focus on every initiative is the family physician. That is why member physicians trust the LAFP to support them throughout their future, no matter what career path they choose.

LAFP Membership

During transition from residency to practice, your membership will ensure you the support you need, be rest assured that it will not end when your residency does.

What we need from you now is:

- Updated Contact Information
- Licensure Information to the AAFP

Once you provide this information, your membership will be updated and you will be an Active Member!

Continuing Medical Education (CME)

Family physicians rely on CME programs and products for high quality, relevant learning experiences. LAFP CME activities address physicians' learning needs and practice gaps as are recognized on a state level.

You may receive CME by reading the *Louisiana Family Doctor*, or by checking online under the CME section of the LAFP website. We constantly update these webpage's as CME is one of the core priorities of the LAFP.

LAFP Scientific Assembly

Join us each year for LAFP's Annual Assembly and Exhibition. This is the LAFP's premiere CME event and by far the largest. Join your fellow Louisiana members of all ages and practices in one location!

Meet residents and family physicians with common interests including humanitarian effort, federal and state advocacy, research, fitness and of course, fun with friends and family!

Advocacy

Today's health environment is changing rapidly and fundamentally. The LAFP legislative efforts indicate the LAFP is working to change the practice environment and reach its goal of universal access to health care and better payment modes that support Family Medicine.

Louisiana Family Medicine Political Action Committee (LaFamPac)

LaFamPac is the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians' state political action committee (PAC). Its purpose is to help elect candidates to the LA Legislature who support LAFP's legislative goals and objectives with the intention to strengthen the voice of the LAFP and Family Medicine in Louisiana.

We support candidates who are sympathetic to the cause of promoting quality health care and the medical profession and provide education to candidates and potential candidates who seek public office. This voluntary family medicine PAC provides Louisiana family physicians a strong voice in the LA state legislature and helps the Academy in its efforts to impact both health policy and the overall practice.

Leadership

Leadership is a learned skill, and the opportunities for leadership are multiplying.

National Conference of Constituency Leaders (NCCL)

If you want to get more involved in your state and national academies, being a delegate to the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) annual [National Conference of Constituency Leaders \(NCCL\)](#) is the perfect opportunity.

LAFP Committees and Board of Directors

LAFP offers leadership training through opportunities on committees as well as our Board of Directors. By being an Academy leader, you will have a voice and vote on key issues affecting the Family Medicine specialty.

LAFP provides opportunities for both **Resident and New Physician** members to coordinate statewide activities for the fellow family medicine colleagues. Whether it is education, legislation or membership that interest you, we have a place for your voice to be heard and to speak for the betterment of your profession. Please visit the LAFP Website Board of Directors page for more details.

Serving the Specialty

GET INVOLVED

Through your LAFP membership, you can become a force for positive change and make meaningful contributions to family medicine. You can advocate for patients by helping to create more efficient healthcare delivery and cost effective services. You'll also build a network of family physician colleagues across the country and flex your leadership abilities. Participating members say that speaking out about policy development and lobbying reenergizes their commitment to their work and their community.

ADVOCACY ON YOUR BEHALF

1. Increase access to affordable, quality and comprehensive health care.
2. Successfully address the severe shortage of primary care physicians in Louisiana.
3. Significantly improve the overall health of Louisiana and its citizens

The LAFP supports state legislation and policy that supports:

Protects Medical Liability Caps – The current statutory medical liability cap on non-economic damages is rational, reasonable and provides stability to Louisiana's health care system. It is vital to maintaining affordable, high quality care in attracting qualified doctors in Louisiana.

Develops & Implements the Patient Centered Medical Home Model – The Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) places an emphasis on prevention and wellness to eliminate unnecessary care and could save Louisiana's Medicaid program millions of dollars. Under the PCMH model, primary care physicians oversee all aspects of a patient's care and coordinate a team of specialty practitioners to meet the patient's needs at every stage of life. Also, qualified PCMH physician practices would be eligible for increased payments for face-to-face primary care services and a per-patient, per-month care management fee for each PCMH Medicaid patient.

Creates Medical Student Loan Forgiveness Program – Louisiana has a severe shortage of primary care physicians. To help fill that gap, the LAFP supports a loan forgiveness program for medical students who agree to practice in high shortage areas in Louisiana, with a special focus on those who specialize in primary care.

Increases Medicaid Reimbursement Rate – In an effort to attract physicians to Louisiana, the LAFP will pursue increases in the MA reimbursement rate for physicians, especially those that relate to pay-for-performance strategies and/or the development of a PCMH payment structure.

Reasons to Get Involved

Network with family physicians from all across the state by attending national and state meetings

- ▶ Spend time with other new physician, resident, and student leaders who share your interests and concerns.
- ▶ Cultivate organizational and communication skills.
- ▶ Discuss issues key to health care delivery and to family medicine.
- ▶ Learn more about topics of special interest.

Start from the beginning....



Obtain License

The Louisiana Board of Medical Examiners (LSBME) is responsible for determining qualifications of applicants for licensure, enforcing the medical practice act through the rule making process and also renewal of licenses to practice. The application process generally takes around 90 days from the time the LSBME receives the completed application. For more information on licensure, go to the LSBME website www.lsbme.louisiana.gov.

Register with DEA/CDS Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)

To legally prescribe controlled substance, you must register with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). This process may take several months. For more information about DEA and how to register go the [DEA website](#) or call (800) 882-9539.

To contact your local DEA office:

New Orleans Division
3838 North Causeway Blvd., Ste 1800
Lakeway III
Metairie, LA 70002
(504) 840-1076

Registration Number:
(888) 514-7302 or (888) 514-8051

- You must obtain a DEA Number, issued by the US Department of Justice. It must appear on all prescriptions. If you move, a new number is required
- Drug thefts and patients seeking restricted drugs under false pretenses must be reported to DEA.
- Prescription pads for controlled substances may be ordered from any one of many approved printers. Written prescriptions for controlled substances must be on a tamper-resistant security prescription forms that have been preprinted by a Board-approved printer and must contain specific elements. For a list of approved security prescription vendors, go to the [Louisiana State Board of Pharmacy](#) website.
- Physicians may prescribe drugs only in the regular practice of their profession and may not prescribe controlled substance to patients not under their care.

Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS)

In Louisiana, you are required to register with the DEA and CDS. The Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS) license is the state's authority to work with controlled substances. You must possess both licenses to manufacture, distribute, procure, possess, prescribe, dispense, or conduct research with controlled substances.

To apply for a CDS license visit the Board of Pharmacy's website at www.pharmacy.la.gov. The vertical menu board on the left side of the home page has further information and process directions.

Professional Liability Coverage

Most hospitals and managed care organizations will require you to have some type of professional liability coverage. You will need adequate coverage before seeing your first patient. A good resource for you to examine is the Louisiana Department of Insurance. The LAFP recommends contacting a physician owned malpractice insurance company, to name a few:

There are many options when it comes to policy types, so you

LAMMICO
www.lammico.com
(800) 452-2120

The Physicians Trust
thephysicianstrust.com
(225) 368-3888

need to consider which type best fits your circumstances. You may want to seek referrals from other physicians in your area. The AAFP provides you with more ways to protect yourself with the [right malpractice insurance policy](#).

TIP:

Hire an attorney you know and trust to help with legal issues before they arise.

Start from the beginning....

Managed Care Organizations

Managed care has become the predominant health insurance in the United States with nearly 90 percent of Americans covered by a type of managed care plan. The Managed care organizations (MCOs) integrate the delivery of care with financing of care by contracting with physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers.

The AAFP has several resources to help you make the transition from residency to practice, including:

- Principles of Interaction Between Family Physicians and Health Plans and Patient-Centered Formularies
- Managed Care Contract Negotiation
- AAFP Guidelines for Interaction in “Hospitalist” Models

Credentialing

The process of provider credentialing should begin as soon as you know which managed care organizations your practice will use. You need to allow yourself ample time to become credentialed, as the process can take up to six months to complete. Be sure to have your state medical license and/or proof of potential liability coverage before applying for credentials. As a new physician, there are often problems associated with obtaining your credentials. However, there are way to reduce those problems.

You can check with your employer or practice manager to see if your MCO(s) subscribe to the Universal Credentialing Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH). The CAQH offers a single national process that eliminates the need for multiple credentialing applications.

Visit the [Universal Credentialing Data Source](#) to find out more information. This may be an option for you.

Hospital Privileges

Once you have determined the hospitals you would like to be affiliated, you will need to apply to the medical staff office at the hospital. Obtain an application for medical staff membership and privileges from the office as soon as possible, it often takes three to six months for privileges to be granted. Be prepared to provide documentation from your residency training.

Remember to keep all written documentation from your residency training regarding any and all procedures you have performed, especially gastrointestinal and obstetrical procedures. Many staff applications require specific information. The AAFP can provide you with some privileging policies information and well as other privileging resources.



Start from the beginning....

Federal Programs

Federal health insurance programs will constantly appear throughout your career. It is important to become familiar with these programs and the policies associated with each program. For specific information on Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program, visit the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#).

State Programs

Here are a few of Louisiana's assisted health insurance polices:

Medicare Recipients (65 year of age and older)	Medicare Savings Program (888) 342-6207
Workers with Disabilities	Medicaid Purchase Plan (888) 342-6207
Long Term Care	Louisiana Medicaid Long Term Care (888) 342-6207
Uninsured/underinsured children with disabilities in families with too much income to qualify for Regular Medicaid of LaChip	Family Opportunity Act Medicaid (888) 342-6207
Individuals who are disabled, blind, very low-income parents of children under 19.	General Medicaid Program (888) 342-6207
Children under the age of 19	LaChip (Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program) (877) 252-2447

For more resources and information on federal programs, please visit these websites:

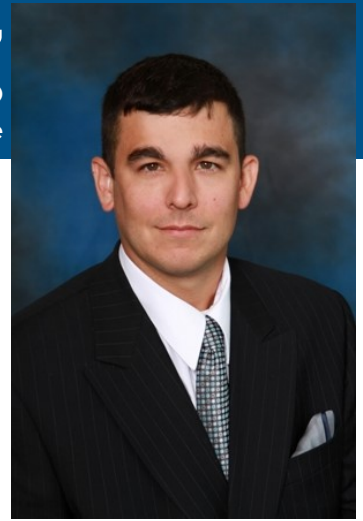
[Louisiana Medicare](#)- Louisiana Medicare is a federal program that provides insurance to people who are 65 years of age and above. Some people with permanent disabilities and chronic renal diseases may also be eligible.

[Louisiana Medicaid](#)- Louisiana's Medicaid Program provides medical coverage for needy Louisiana residents who qualify.

[Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals](#)- The mission of the Department of Health and Hospitals is to protect and promote health and to ensure access to medical, preventive and rehabilitative services for all citizens of the State of Louisiana. DHH also regulates the Medicaid services for the state of Louisiana. To find out more about new Medicaid systems, visit the DHH website.

“Things I wish I would have Known...”

-Jason Fuqua, MD
LAFP New Physician Representative



As a recent residency graduate and first-time practice owner, I was asked by the staff at the LAFP to put together a little list of things I wish I would have known before starting my medical practice.

After thinking on it a while, and also asking a few opinions, I was able to put this list together:

1. **Coding:** This is probably the one area that can make or cost you more money than you realize. Get ahead of the game and start working on coding and documenting for billing purposes. There are also modifiers that can get you the compensation you deserve. No matter what you think of the system we practice in, it's what pays the bills and we don't want to leave money on the table.
2. **Contracts:** Know the language in the contract. Have a lawyer and an accountant (both familiar with medical contracts) look over the contract. Remember that contracts have to work two ways—both you and your employer/hospital have to be happy with the language. And while we are talking about that, know what the tax implications of loan forgiveness/salary guarantee are (hint—you get taxed on it at some point) because the language dictates this.
3. **Partnerships:** Don't just sign off on joining a practice. Make sure you go through and do your research on the doctor(s) in the practice. What is the payer mix? What are the most common complaints (ie: Does one doctor practice in areas you are not comfortable working in, like pain management, OB)—remember that patient seeing this physician will expect you to practice the same way.
4. **Patience:** Remember that when you first start out, it will take a while to build up your patient base. Don't settle or sell your ethics short to get an extra patient or two. Your practice will be what you make it, so make it a good one.
5. **Insurance:** Make sure you start enrolling in insurance plans as soon as you know where you will be. It can take several months to get on plans, and you don't always get to retroactively collect for patients you saw while you were waiting to get approval.
6. **Business:** I don't know about you, but I didn't go to business school. Surround yourself with people that understand the business of healthcare. This is especially important with the changing landscape of today's healthcare climate.
7. **Mentors:** Find out who in your area you can ask for advice. Don't be afraid to ask those who have been there before you. We all got a really good training in our residency—however, that only lasts for three years and there is a lot of stuff we don't see while we are there. (tip: the LAFP has a mentorship program)
8. **Referral Base:** Get to know your specialist. There is a reason that a lot of grads stay in the same area they trained. If you relocate, go on a meet-and-greet of the guys you will be sending referrals to—they will send some your way as well!!
9. **Medical Records:** Get to know the system you will be working on. Remember that the trend is toward EMR, for better or for worse. If you are joining an existing venture that has EMR, make sure you like it. If you are planning to start out on EMR, start looking for the one that works best for you—they are not all created equal.
10. **Balance:** Take time to have a life outside of medicine. This is your career, and it is real easy to let it consume you when you start out. Take time out for yourself, it will help you and your patients in the long run.

Good luck during this process.

Remember that there are organizations like the

LAFP out there that are here to help you.

Practice Settings

As a family physician, you will have the flexibility to shape your career in order to take advantage of your knowledge and unique interest. In addition to patient care, we have many members also involved in research, public health, education and administrative roles!

There are many practice setting options. Here are some of the dynamics of each option for you to consider. Make the right choice for you!

<p>Solo Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control and autonomy • Ability to set own schedule • Significant administrative and managerial responsibilities • Responsibility for start-up and over head costs 	<p>State and Government Sponsored Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique experience • Broad scope of practice • Security or administrative rules may infringe on autonomy • Requirements to adhere to government policies and regulations
<p>Group Practice Small Group/Multi-Specialty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established patient base • Schedule/coverage flexibility • Partnership with other physicians • Potential income division conflicts • Assistance from other physicians in the office • Possible ownership opportunity 	<p>HMO/Permanente Medical Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established patient case • In network/internal physician referrals • No overhead costs
<p>Community Clinic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with underserved population • Ability to partner with other clinics/hospitals • Opportunity to give back to the community • May depend on federal and/or public funding 	<p>Academia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to teach and/or mentor • Limited clinical responsibilities • Opportunity to mold new generation of family physicians • Flexibility with involvement in various projects
<p>International Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to travel • Insight into other medical communities • Unique experience • Contract-based and full-time positions 	<p>Another Option: Locum Tenens Fill a temporary opening in a hospital or practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsure about your practice setting, gives you options to explore • Job assignments can range from a few days to several months • Benefit of checking out working arrangements beforehand <p>More information: AAFP's list of Locum Tenens agencies or call (800) 274-2237, Ext. 4162</p>

TIP: Curriculum Vitae (CV)

It is very important to have an effective curriculum vitae (CV) when applying for your ideal job. The AAFP has put together [How to Prepare your Curriculum Vitae](#). This resource will give you information on how to write a personal statement, suggestions for reference materials on CV preparation, and tips for requesting letters of reference.

Interview Process

Interviewing for a professional opportunity is an important process. You should first assess a practice's general characteristics. Once you have decided these characteristics suit you, then work out the details. Use these areas of questioning to help decide if this practice is right for you, and if you are right for this practice.

Questions You Should Ask Yourself:

- Location— *Does the location meet your family's needs/desires?*
- Practice Characteristics— *What is the working relationship like between doctors and staff?*
- Quality of Care— *How does the practice improve patient outcomes?*
- Office Management— *How frequently does the office measure patient cycle time and flow?*
- Practice Stability— *What kind of reserves or financial backing does the practice have?*
- Work Expectations— *How many Patients will you see each day?*

About interviewing

The interview should be about you and the practice deciding if you would be a good fit. The potential employer/partner will be assessing your personality type and clinical skill levels to see if you are an ideal candidate. You should also make observations during the interview of things you like and dislike about the potential partnership.

Before the first interview

Decide where you want to practice, the type of practice you are looking for, and so on—identify the ideal practice characteristics before you send out your résumé.

Your cover letter should be concise, engaging, and persuasive. Communicate why your background and interests have led you to apply for the position and why you would be a good fit.

Limit the cover letter to one page and have a friend or colleague proofread it for spelling and grammatical errors.

Your résumé or CV should highlight your accomplishments and skills. For examples of résumés and CVs, consult online sources, such as the [National Institutes of Health](#).

At the interview

Schedule the interview on a day you will be rested; never interview post-call. Always be prompt for a job interview. Leave plenty of time for transportation and plan for the unexpected: getting lost, having trouble finding parking, etc. If you are unfamiliar with the area, it may be worthwhile to do a practice run. Dress professionally; it is always better to be overdressed than underdressed.

Interview Process

Try to relax and enjoy yourself as much as possible. Be natural, but professional, and try to establish rapport with your interviewers. A quality family physician has good people skills, so show your friendly side. Make eye contact and smile as much as possible. The person interviewing you is likely thinking, “What are our patients going to think of this person? Will they like him/her?” Try to demonstrate attention to detail, inquisitiveness and follow-through ... all essential attributes for physicians.

Listen carefully to the questions you are asked and always assess what the interviewer is trying to discover about you through his or her questions. Take a moment to gather your thoughts before answering. Be as responsive as possible in your answers. Give concise examples from your work or life to back up what you say.

Questions you might be asked:

- Why do you think you are a good fit for this practice?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- Describe a few difficult patient interactions and how you dealt with those situations.
- Describe how you respond to work pressures.
- Where do you see yourself in five years? In 10 years? How does working in our practice fit with your professional goals?
- What do you like most about your specialty?
- What are your interests outside of practicing medicine?
- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your résumé/CV.

Demonstrating stability, maturity and commitment is critical, and this involves looking beyond the day-to-day elements of practice. You will be joining not only a practice, but a community, as well. What can you contribute to the community? Your “fit” with other personnel can be crucial, so be friendly, open and establish eye contact. Smile!



Prospective Practice or Partnership

It is important to consider other factors before joining a practice or forming a partnership with other physicians. The new prospective practice/partner and yourself should have similar ideas, goals, and understanding of how this practice will run. These are a few topics/questions to ask your potential employer, business partner, and yourself.

<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Location meet your family's needs/desires◦ Community's demographics-growing/underserved◦ Cost of living <p>Practice characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Working relationship between physicians◦ Option to work with hospitalized patients◦ Privileging at the local hospital◦ Working conditions with specializing physicians in the area <p>Quality of care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Quality measurement understanding◦ Consultations and Referrals, Any restrictions?◦ Medical Records system, Are they available to review?◦ Evidence-based, peer reviewed guidelines◦ Clinical policy decision making◦ Current and future goals for future technology tools <p>Office management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Patient scheduling◦ Patient waiting room average time◦ Office measure patient cycle time and flow◦ Patient satisfaction/experience measurement◦ Provider satisfaction measured◦ Billing/Collection ratio◦ Staff turnover rate/Staff satisfaction◦ Adequate equipment for your scope of medicine, will they buy/lease equipment if not?◦ Is the facility comfortable? Could you work there efficiently?◦ Type of information and technology systems in place◦ Your input in office policies	<p>Work expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Patients expected in a day◦ Patient panel◦ Work-ins/emergency patients◦ Seniority◦ Patient population language◦ Amount of days in your work week◦ Vacation options <p>Practice economics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Finance management/monitoring◦ HMO contracts◦ Health plans/IPAs/medical groups in the area◦ Type of billing system◦ Pay for Performance (P4P), If so, how many different programs? <p>Practice stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Strategic planning last conducted and what type◦ Reserves and Financial backing◦ Ownership agreement◦ Physician turnover rate, Can you contact them?◦ "Buy in" opportunities <p>Practice costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Total overhead, division among physicians◦ Capital expenditures◦ Ratio of full/part-time staff <p>Access to risk pools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Are you at risk for utilization of outpatient services?◦ Is efficient management of care rewarded? If so, how?◦ Does the medical group accept pharmacy risk? <p>Compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Salary guarantee? For how long?◦ Anticipated earnings in future years◦ Bonuses◦ Retirement plan◦ Benefits
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Legal matters- A written employment agreement should cover:

- The work expected of you
- Exclusivity requirements (i.e., can you moonlight?)
- Compensation (i.e., amount and when paid)
- Malpractice insurance including tail coverage (i.e., coverage required if/when you leave a professional liability company or leave practice)
- Employment termination clause (i.e., does the clause have "for cause" and "without cause" termination policies?)
- Non-competition clause—how restrictive is it?

TIP: Have your lawyer and accountant review any and all contracts before your sign

Employment Agreements

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS ABOUT NON-COMPETE PROVISIONS

Many employment agreements contain provisions regarding term, termination, compensation, insurance (tail vs. occurrence), indemnification, and non-competition. However, a recurrent question that has been raised is the legality of non-compete provisions in employment agreements with physicians. As physicians begin to finish their residency programs or relocate to Louisiana, many are immediately perplexed by the inclusion of non-compete provisions in their proposed agreements. Too often we hear physicians say, "I thought non-competes weren't legal in light of the shortage of physicians."

An employment agreement with a physician creates a relationship which should be designed as a mutually beneficial arrangement. With the continuous decline in reimbursements to health care entities, the shortage of health care professionals, and the overall growing concerns about health care, non-compete provisions have become increasingly common in employment agreements.

The non-compete provision is a restrictive covenant that is designed to protect the employer, who usually expends great sums of time and money not only in recruiting physicians to the community, but also in assisting the physician in establishing his/her patient base and reputation within the area. The premise of a non-compete provision is based on the apprehension that upon the physician's termination of the agreement, the physician will gain a competitive advantage by using confidential, proprietary, or sensitive information about his or her former employer's operations, including its customer/client contacts, business practices and marketing strategies.

Simply put, a non-compete provision is a term under which an employee agrees "not to do" the acts specified in the provision. Typically this includes an agreement that the physician will refrain from engaging in a business similar to that of the employer and/or from soliciting customers of the employer, or joining a competitor in the event of termination of his or her relationship with the employer.

Although the enforceability of non-compete provisions varies from state to state, Louisiana courts have held that a non-compete provision may be valid as long as it complies with statutorily created requirements, which include a two (2) year limitation in duration of the restrictive covenant, and specificity of the geographical area to which the non-compete provision is applicable.

While this article focuses on physician employment agreements, physicians should be mindful that the same analysis is applicable to physicians who are independent contractors. Physicians should not immediately cringe at the sight of a non-compete provision in an employment or independent contractor agreement. However, it is important that he/she fully understand the limitations that the provision imposes, the circumstances under which the non-compete limitations are enforceable, and the full impact of his/her actions during employment as well as after termination of his/her relationship with the employer.

Although it is a myth that non-compete provisions are not applicable to physicians and are illegal, it is not a myth that physicians should seek legal counsel to review any employment or independent contractor agreement prior to signing. Having an experienced health care attorney review any proposed agreement can ensure that the physician fully understands each provision in the proposed agreement and that the employment or independent contractor relationship is mutually beneficial, as it will also provide for the opportunity to negotiate terms within the agreement.

Nicholas Gachassin, III and Berryl Thompson-Broussard are attorneys at Gachassin Law Firm, which is dedicated to the representation and counseling of healthcare providers.

Managing Your Practice

The LAFP along with the AAFP have put together a helpful overview of topics you should consider when choosing and managing your practice situation.

Starting your own practice

If you are thinking of starting your own practice in Louisiana, it is important that you begin your planning early. There are many aspects you need to consider to establish a successful practice. The process should begin with careful evaluation of potential locations and managed care or other health insurance income streams. Credentialing will take several months, so allow yourself an ample amount of time to become credentialed with Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial health plans. Building a healthy business will give you and your staff more time to spend with your patients by minimizing the time needed to run your business. Here are a few tips to help you get started.

Marketing your practice

Marketing your practice is a key business tool to help establish a flourishing patient base. When starting your own practice, you need to consider which type of marketing plan will work best for you. Consider the practice's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to its success.

The AAFP has established some marketing tips for your practice:

- Identify your competitors and compare your practice to theirs. What can you do to make your practice stand out?
- Build a referral base. Introduce yourself to local pharmacists, medical societies, referral services, staff at hospitals and emergency departments, and other colleagues.
- Become a friendly voice of authority. Speak to schools, at community and hospital organizations, and submit columns on health care issues to your local newspaper.
- Publish articles in the LAFP weekly e-newsletter and submit CME articles for accreditation in the quarterly journal—Louisiana Family Doctor. This is a great, FREE way to get your name out there!
- The AAFP offers kits with outlines and speaking points on topics such as weight control, nutrition, smoking cessation, TAR WARS, women's health, STDs, and alcohol. To order any of these tools, call (800) 274-2237.
- Create and maintain a website for your practice to enhance communication with your patients.
- For more marketing tips read the [AAFP's Family Practice Management](#).

Prepare Now

Disasters and emergencies can happen at any time. Are you prepared? Is your practice prepared? The AAFP connects you to information and resources you need to be prepared for disasters of many kinds.

Pandemic Influenza

Use these resources to help prepare your office for a pandemic influenza outbreak.

[Business Planning Checklist to Prepare Family Medicine Officers for Pandemic Influenza \(2 page PDF\)](#)

[Pandemic Influenza - Clinical Considerations \(4 page PDF\)](#)

[Checklist to Prepare Physicians' Offices for Pandemic Influenza \(4 page PDF\)](#)

Disaster Preparedness

Customize these easy-to-use disaster preparedness manuals to create a disaster preparedness plan for use in the midst of a disaster or disaster recovery period.

[Section I: Personal Preparedness \(27 page DOC\)](#)

[Section II: Practice Preparedness \(54 page DOC\)](#)

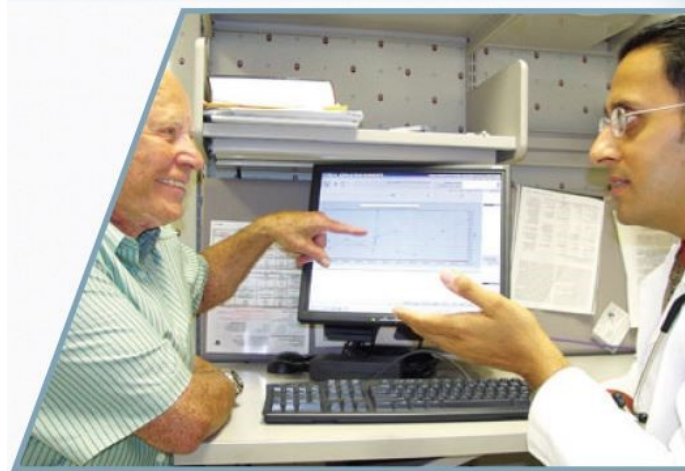
[Section III: Community Preparedness \(9 page DOC\)](#)

Managing Your Practice

Coding

When it comes to coding, it is important to realize that you must stay on top of changes that can impact your payment. This can prove to be challenging, but it can make or break your payment system. Start working on coding and documenting for billing purposes.

There are also modifiers that can get you the compensation you deserve. The LAFP continues to announce any updates on coding on the www.lafp.org as well as the Weekly Family Medicine Update. Be sure you are signed up to receive your today! Pictured right is the Weekly Family Medicine Update.

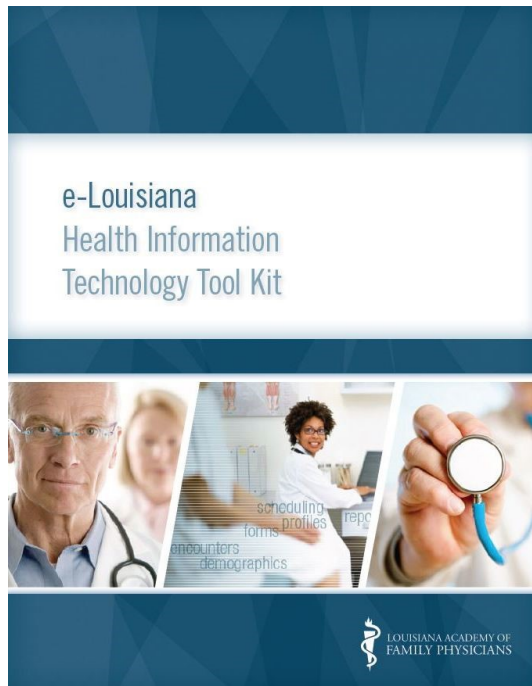


The AAFP has provided a great deal of [coding](#) resources on their website that will help you along the way. Resources may be found at www.aafp.org and then following: [Home Page > Running a Practice > Coding Resources & Assistance](#)

Remember to stay on top of any changes that may occur, this is your money!

E-Louisiana HIT Toolkit

The Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians (LAFP) and the LHIT Resource Center (LHIT) worked together to develop a comprehensive toolkit to help guide physicians through the process of adopting an electronic health record (EHR) and achieving Meaningful Use. The E-Louisiana HIT Toolkit is available to all members of the LAFP and LHIT courtesy of a grant awarded by the Physicians Foundation.



The purpose of the toolkit is to simplify the process and guide physicians through the adoption of an EHR system for use in their clinical practice. Inside the E-Louisiana HIT Toolkit you will discover qualification and assessment wizards, guidance on working with the LHIT, tips on vendor selection and useful interactive worksheets to help guide you through EHR from inception to implementation.

For more information about the toolkit, go to the [E-Louisiana HIT Toolkit](#) web-page on the LAFP website. The toolkit will provide you with the information that you need, including the system you should choose

Managing Your Practice

Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH)

A Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) is simply a better way – a more effective and efficient model of health care delivery.

This new model produces better care and lower costs.

In a Patient Centered Medical Home:

- Patients have a **relationship** with a personal primary care physician.
- A practice-based care team takes collective responsibility for the patient's **ongoing care**.
- The **care team** is responsible for providing or arranging **all** the patient's health care needs.
- Patients can expect care that is **coordinated** across care settings and disciplines.
- **Quality** is measured and improved as part of daily work flow.
- Patients experience **enhanced access** and communication.
- The practice uses **electronic health records**, registries, and other **clinical support systems**.

The patient-centered medical home is a health care delivery model based on the relationship between a patient and their personal primary care physician. With its growing popularity in the health care reform discussion, LAFP provides you with tools to educate yourself, your colleagues and your patients on the medical home.

Patient-Centered Medical Home

One step at a time.
Get started.



Managing Your Practice

The Next Generation of Care: Determining the Medical-Homeness of a Practice

The Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) is the future of primary care in the United States. Through a personal physician, comprehensive care is coordinated and individualized to improve both the quality of care and access to cost-effective services. The following questions were designed to assist medical students who are interviewing with prospective residency programs to better understand the features of the PCMH and how individual programs have implemented the principles outlined. These questions are also relevant to family medicine residents who are seeking a practice that is built on the PCMH model.

Access to Care

1. How does your practice provide patient-centered enhanced access (e.g., evening or weekend hours, open-access (same day) scheduling, e-visits)?

Electronic Health Records

1. What aspects of your medical home are electronic (e.g., medical records, order entry, e-prescriptions)?
2. Does your practice use a Personal Health Record that allows patients to communicate their medical history from home to the healthcare team?

Population Management

1. Do you use patient registries to track your patients with chronic diseases and monitor for preventive services that are due?
2. Does your practice use reminder systems to let patients know when they are due for periodic testing (e.g., screening colonoscopy, PAP smear, mammogram) or office visits (e.g., annual exam)?

Team-Based Care

1. Who comprises your medical home team and how do they work together to deliver comprehensive care to your patients?
2. What services can non-physician members of the team (nurse practitioners, medical assistants, social workers, etc.) provide for your patients (e.g., diabetic or asthma education)? How do you train them and ensure competency?

Continuous Quality Improvement

1. How do you monitor and work to improve the quality of care provided in your medical home?
2. How do you monitor your ability to meet patients' expectations (e.g., patient satisfaction surveys)?
3. Are residents involved in helping to enhance practice quality and improve systems innovations?

Care Coordination

1. How does your practice ensure care coordination with specialists and other providers?
2. How does your practice ensure seamless transitions between the hospital and outpatient environment?

Innovative Services

1. What procedural services are offered in your medical home (e.g., obstetrical ultrasound, treadmill stress testing, x-rays)?
2. Does your medical home provide group visits (e.g., prenatal group visit)?

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Managing Your Practice

Documentation

Documenting is essential to making sure you provide good patient care and are in turn compensated for your efforts. You have learned about documenting and its importance in residency, but it is very important to stay up to date on all documentations. Check out the AAFP's [Family Practice Toolbox \(FPM Toolbox\)](#) for time-saving flow sheets, standardized forms, exam templates, efficient charting formats, and more resources to help you improve your efficiency and effective record keeping.

Family Practice Management

If you accept a position within a practice or with an employer who has adopted electronic health records (EHRs), you will quickly gain an appreciation for how quickly you can retrieve and use clinical data from a well-organized, documented electronic patient chart. EHRs can also help collect, report, and analyze clinical performance data for in-office quality improvement and some of the enhanced payment incentives from health plans. For more ideas on implementation or use of EHRs, visit the [Center for Health IT](#).

Balance between your Practice and your Life

Managing a successful career or starting your own practice is based on the achievement of a balanced life. If you put your personal life on hold during training and school, now is the time to become refocused on getting it back. Not only should you set a professional three, five and ten year plan, but you should as well set one for your personal life. Then when offers come your way for different Family Medicine positions, you can revisit your personal plan to see how it will benefit or hinder that as well.

It is important to remember to take time for yourself. If you establish a balance between your work life and your life outside of work, this transition will be much easier.

This process can consume your time, so you must take time out for yourself and your loved ones. If you make sure to have some "YOU" time, your patients and your personal life will benefit.

Now is the time to establish the list of your personal and professional goals. Write down things that are important to you and configure a plan of how to achieve these goals. It is important to have hobbies and interests that are your own. When considering your practice options, make sure your lifestyle fits in with the potential practice settings. It is true that the practice decision you make today most likely will not be your last.

The AAFP has many resources to help you find a good [Physician Life Balance](#). These different resources contain tips and strategies to help you establish your balance.



New Physician Checklist

This checklist was created to help give you an idea of issues to consider as you enter into your new practice. This checklist will help point you in the right direction.

Residency Completion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fellowship Completion (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice Preferences	<input type="checkbox"/>
CV Prepared/Completed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prospective Employer/Location Research	<input type="checkbox"/>
CME Report Updated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedures Tracking Sheet Created	<input type="checkbox"/>
Application Log	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contract	<input type="checkbox"/>
Licensures/Permits	
Medical (state #1).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical (state #2)	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEA/CDS number.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Department of Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Licensure Update	<input type="checkbox"/>
Credentialing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital Privileging	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact LAFP	<input type="checkbox"/>



Loan Repayment Options



The Family Medicine specialty is in high demand throughout the country. Communities, hospitals, managed care organizations and physician groups are all actively recruiting graduates of Family Medicine residency programs.

Recognizing the demand for primary care physicians, there are several loan repayment programs that offer incentives for physicians who choose to practice in underserved areas.

Programs are in place to help you pay back your medical school loans. In exchange for significant repayment help most of the programs require the recipient to agree to a two year minimum of providing primary care services

in federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA).

There are options at the National and State level, these are a few:

Louisiana State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP)

The purpose of this program is to encourage primary care practitioners to serve in HPSA. The compensation options help to enhance the provision of the health care services, and in return the program will repay governmental or commercial educational loans obtained by the physician. Visit the [LAFP website](#) for more information about this option.

National Health Service Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) is a federal program housed in the Bureau of Health Professions in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NHSC has both a scholarship and loan repayment program for eligible health professionals in exchange for healthcare in designated underserved areas. Family physicians have participated in the loan repayment program. Participants of both the scholarship and loan repayment programs are placed into HPSA's designated by the U.S. Office of Shortage Designation. More information can be found on the [NHSC Web site](#) or by calling NHSC's toll-free number 800.221.9393, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. EST.

Faculty Loan Repayment Program (FLRP)

This program provides a financial incentive for degree-trained health professionals from disadvantaged background to pursue academic careers. The Federal government agrees to pay, for each year of faculty service, up to \$40,000 of the outstanding principal and interest on the participant's educational loans. For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration's website at <http://www.hrsa.gov/index.html>

When considering student loan consolidation, explore the many different options and financial arrangements. Many people make the mistake of jumping on the first loan consolidation program they see.

Important: By law, you may only consolidate your loans *ONCE*. It is crucial for you to investigate the different options available to you. The more investigative work you do, the better your financial decision will be in the end. More information on loan repayment is available in the AAFP's [Debt Management Guide](#).

LAFP Partnerships

Being a member of the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians (LAFP) signifies your decision to identify and associate with the most knowledgeable family physicians and become a part of America's largest specialty society. As the only association that speaks solely for the family physician, your decision to join the LAFP/AAFP helps make the voice of family medicine heard. The LAFP Strives to improve member benefits as well as increase them every year. We are constantly finding new partnerships to benefit you and your practice as well as increasing avenues of communication with the community. Access all benefits at www.lafp.org.



LAFP has formed a partnership with vaccine purchasing program **Atlantic Health Partners** to save family physicians money when purchasing vaccines and advocate on behalf of family medicine practices among manufacturers and payers. There is no cost for LAFP members to enroll in the program and enrollment is voluntary.

The Core Content Review of Family Medicine

Educating Family Physicians Since 1968



The **Core Content Review of Family Medicine** is a unique educational resource for family physicians and other primary care professionals who desire a comprehensive, practical and affordable home-study program for earning continuing medical education (CME) credit or preparing for Board examination.

Online Resources

Staying Current with Medicine:

American Family Physician
www.aafp.org/afp

Journal of Family Practice
www.jfponline.com

ACP Journal Club
www.acpjcc.org/?hp

Up-to-Date
www.uptodate.com

Essential Evidence PLUS
www.essentialevidenceplus.com/

Practice Management and Managed Care:

Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians
www.lafp.org

Family Practice Management
www.aafp.org/fpm

National Guideline Clearinghouse
www.guideline.gov

Physicians Practice
www.physicianspractice.com

Medical Professional Management and Marketing
www.practicemgmt.com

Medico-Legal Resources:

AMA's Legal Issues for Physicians
www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/4541.html

Cooperative of American Physicians
www.capmpt.com/risk_management/risk_management_library/articles_and_forms

Harvard University Risk Management Foundation
www.rmhf.harvard.edu

Payment and Compensation Information:

Medical Group Management Association
www.mgma.com

Family Practice Management
www.aafp.org/fpm

Technology Resources:

AAFP's Center for Health Information Technology
www.centerforhit.org

AAFP Partners for Patients EHR Program
www.centerforhit.org/x25.xml

Family Practice Management
www.aafp.org/fpm

Employment Opportunities & Career Planning:

LAFP Career Center
www.lafp.org/careercenter

AAFP Physician Placement Services & Career Opportunities Online
www.aafp.org/careers

American College of Physicians Career Opportunities
www.acponline.org/jobs

Family Medicine Specialty Resources:

Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians
www.lafp.org

American Academy of Family Physicians
www.aafp.org

American Board of Family Medicine
www.theabfm.org

AAFP CME Courses
www.aafp.org/cme

AAFP Discounts for New FPs
www.aafp.org/experience.xml

Loan Repayment:

National Health Service Corps (NHSC)/State Loan Repayment Program
<http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/>
Louisiana Loan Repayment Program Corp
<http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/1195>

AAFP Funding Resources for Practicing in Underserved Areas
www.aafp.org/online/en/home/clinical/publichealth/culturalprof/underserved.html



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