

STEPPING AWAY FROM YOUR CLINICAL CAREER?

KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND ABOUT PHYSICIAN REENTRY

It is common for physicians to leave clinical practice for some period during their career and then seek to reenter clinical practice. Some physicians leave clinical practice to pursue a career opportunity or passion in a non-clinical setting. This could be either short-term (just a few years) or for an indefinite period. Examples range from taking an administrative position at a hospital, to pursuing a full-time research opportunity, to doing mission work abroad. Physicians who are considering a non-clinical career should keep the following key points in mind.

Be Open to Possibilities

Be aware that even a short-term sabbatical from clinical practice, can make it difficult and expensive to just step back into clinical practice. Be open to the possibility that your professional future may include going back into clinical practice even if at the moment it is not something you see yourself doing. Being prepared for that option is important.

Licensure is a Privilege

Licensure is a privilege. It is often hard to reinstate a license once it has expired. Before you leave clinical practice, contact your medical licensing board to find out about its policies regarding a leave of absence. Ask your board how it handles physicians who are not in clinical practice, if they issue limited licenses, and what statutes, if any, your state has in place to facilitate a return to practice. Overlooking regulatory issues can result in great difficulty and frustration when trying to reestablish a lapsed license.

Explore Ways to Not Leave Clinical Practice Completely

Find out if there are ways to not leave clinical practice completely. Explore opportunities to moonlight or take call at local hospitals, ambulatory centers, and other clinical venues during your absence as a way of maintaining some clinical activity. Look into the possibility of doing volunteer work. Remember that preparation for Maintenance of

Certification (MOC) may require some clinical work to meet criteria for renewal of your specialty boards. Even some non-clinical roles in health care may require MOC status.

Seek Advice from those in Non-Clinical Careers & Others

Consult with physicians who have chosen non-clinical careers and learn what their experience has been like. Seek support and insights from individuals who have been in similar situations, as well as from others, both professionals and non-professionals (mental health professionals, clergy, colleagues, career advisors etc.).

Stay connected with your Clinical Colleagues

Stay connected with your clinical colleagues and maintain paths to reconnect with clinical practice opportunities. You may also need to ask a clinical colleague to serve as a mentor when you return to clinical practice. Consider staying on or joining hospital committees and maintaining contacts within your community that may be useful should you decide to reenter clinical practice.

Keep Informed and Plan Ahead

Keep informed about new developments in your specialty as well as any regulatory issues that may influence a return to clinical practice. Check with local hospitals, specialty boards, and state licensing boards about any changes in requirements that may affect your ability to reenter clinical practice. In the interest of patient safety, be prepared to have to demonstrate your clinical competence. On a regular basis consult resources like The Physician Reentry into the Workforce Project's website at www.physicianreentry.org to remain up-to-date on physician reentry issues. Beware that returning to clinical practice is a process that takes planning. It may take a year or more to return to clinical practice depending on your specialty, state, and time away from clinical practice.

Fair Use Policy: Individuals or organizations interested in distributing this Issue Brief or using its content should acknowledge the authorship of the Physician Reentry into the Workforce Project in an appropriate citation.

Suggested Citation: Stepping Away from Your Clinical Career? Key Points to Keep in Mind About Physician Reentry. American Academy of Pediatrics; The Physician Reentry into the Workforce Project, Elk Grove Village, Ill. 2016.

The Physician Reentry into the Workforce Project is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Division of Workforce and Medical Education Policy in collaboration with the AAP Committee on Pediatric Workforce.