

Working 9 to 5 could cost you business

Extending your hours may bring in the extra patients you need

Being a rehab provider makes you part of the service industry. To provide that service, you need patients to treat. So, although working a schedule that best fits your lifestyle is ideal, it may limit the number of patients to whom you can provide your services.

Rehab providers should keep their doors open when it's convenient for patients. If the majority of your patients are retired Medicare patients, you might be able to get away with working 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but if you mainly deal with athletes and the working population, extended hours may maximize your potential clientele.

"We try to provide as much access as we find reasonable," says **James Glinn, DPT, OCS**, president of San Luis (CA) Sports Therapy & Orthopedic Rehabilitation. "We've experimented with all sorts of hours and weekends and found out what worked best." Asking your patients to identify ideal appointment times also works well, Glinn adds.

For Glinn's practices, the standard operating hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the week and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekends during the school year. "We started off doing Saturdays just to get all the [high school]

athletes who had tough weeks and were trying to get ready for the next week," Glinn says. "But we found that other patients loved Saturdays as well so they wouldn't have to worry about taking time off from their jobs."

Staggering your staff

In smaller facilities it might not be possible to have flexible hours. No therapist should be treating patients 12 hours per day, five days per week. But when possible, facilities should spread staff throughout the day to get the most coverage, says **Bubba Klostermann, OT, CVE, CEAS**, chief operating officer at Work & Rehab in Abilene, TX.

This system typically works well not only for attracting patients, but also for allowing therapists to work the hours they want.

At Klostermann's facilities, he's found that the busiest hours are typically between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., so staggering allows the facility to remain open during lunch hours. "You never want to turn a patient away because you're not open when they want to come in," he says. ■

PTPN lobbying for therapy to Congress

In an effort to amplify the awareness of medical rehab on Capitol Hill, PTPN, the nation's largest network of independent rehabilitation therapists, selected Connolly Strategies and Initiatives to represent therapists' needs in a lobbying effort, which began in July.

"We wanted to give Capitol Hill a sense of what our organization is and what Congress should be aware of in regards to what is going on in the therapy world," says **Michael Weiner, MPH, PT**, president of PTPN in Calabasas, CA. "We have a lot of concerns with the economics of private practice and all the pressures and demands placed on small businesses. Hopefully through these efforts, we'll make life easier on our members and therapists across the country."

Lobbying efforts have already begun to extend the exceptions process to the Medicare therapy caps, avoid a 5.1% cut to the fee schedule, and obtain individual practitioner numbers for all therapists, according to **Jerry Connolly, PT, CAE**, president of Connolly Strategies and Initiatives.

The exceptions process will expire on December 31 if Congress doesn't act, which Connolly says is a real possibility with only one last chance for an extension to take place during a lame duck session in November. Congress wants to help, according to Connolly, but extending the exceptions process could cost nearly \$500 million, an amount that is larger than what the government wishes to spend.

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