

Excellence in Onboarding

*A Section of the **Redesigning Healthcare Recruitment** White Paper*

Onboarding is not a formality—it's a decisive stage that shapes satisfaction, retention, and performance. A structured process accelerates productivity, builds trust, and reduces turnover risk. Strong onboarding begins at offer acceptance and extends beyond day one, turning a new hire into a long-term success.



Strategic onboarding builds satisfaction, strengthens retention, and drives long-term performance.



“Structured onboarding correlates with increased employee engagement, faster time-to-productivity, and longer tenure.”

Why Onboarding Is a Strategic Inflection Point

Effective onboarding is often the most overlooked element in the recruitment lifecycle, yet its impact on retention and performance is profound. Structured onboarding correlates with increased employee engagement, faster time-to-productivity, and longer tenure. Recent findings make this connection starkly clear: 56% of providers who reported a positive onboarding experience also reported being highly satisfied with their job, compared to only 19% of those who had a negative onboarding experience.

Conversely, providers with a negative onboarding experience were six times more likely to report job dissatisfaction than those with a positive experience.¹ These findings show that onboarding is more than a formality; it's a strategic lever that can either solidify a provider's commitment or erode it before clinical work begins. Healthcare systems that invest in welcoming, well-structured onboarding programs are far better positioned to retain providers and cultivate lasting engagement.

Compliance vs. Connection in Onboarding

The most effective programs are purposefully designed, ideally spanning a structured 90-day period.² Interestingly, there is often a gap between what organizations report including in their onboarding process and what new providers actually receive. Recruitment professionals cite near-universal inclusion of key elements such as HR requirements (99%), badge access (95%), credentialing (94%), and IT set-up (93%) as standard parts of onboarding. Yet physicians and clinicians report much lower actual receipt of core onboarding elements—only 79% received timely credentialing and privileging, 78% received a comprehensive facility tour, and just 67% reported having regular checkpoints with supervisors or recruiters.³

Positive Onboarding:

56%

are highly satisfied
with their job

vs.

Negative Onboarding:

19%

are highly satisfied
with their job

What Employers Offer:

HR Requirements – 99%

Badge Access – 95%

Credentialing – 94%

IT Set-Up – 93%

What Providers Need:

**Timely Credentialing
& Privileging** – 79%

Comprehensive Facility Tour – 78%

**Regular Checkpoints with
Supervisors or Recruiters** – 67%

*A structured
90-day program should
balance compliance with
candidate needs.*

¹ Association for Advancing Physician and Provider Recruitment (AAPPR), 2024 Physician and Clinician Onboarding Research Report, 2.

² The Medicus Firm. (2024, February 28). Onboarding excellence in healthcare: A blueprint for retention and success (Blog). <https://www.themedicusfirm.com/news/onboarding-excellence-in-healthcare-a-blueprint-for-retention-and-success>

³ AAPPR, 7.



This disconnect points to a breakdown in execution, where well-intended plans fail to fully translate into the lived experience of new hires. It highlights the importance of not just designing onboarding programs but rigorously delivering and auditing them to ensure consistency and impact. When organizations fall short in this follow-through, it can significantly weaken early engagement, diminish institutional trust, and undercut onboarding effectiveness. This is especially relevant given how providers evaluate early onboarding interactions. 63% of providers say familiarizing themselves with the facility's systems and technology is the most difficult part of starting at a new facility, while nearly half cite learning protocols and procedures as major barriers.⁴ What do providers need most during onboarding? Clarity, structure, and support, which are often underdelivered, even when the infrastructure appears to be in place.

63%
of providers cite
**learning systems
& technology**
as their biggest
onboarding hurdle

Meeting Expectations in the First 90 Days

Additional data reveals similar mismatches across every onboarding phase. For instance, 85.2% of providers say that knowing where to report and who to meet on day one is a 'must-have,' and while 90.1% report receiving this information, gaps remain across other critical onboarding elements—leaving nearly 1 in 10 navigating first-day logistics without adequate direction.⁵ Similarly, while nearly 80% of providers expect an overview of their job expectations and 73.7% want a summary of applicable protocols, availability of these resources trails expectations by 4–7 percentage points. This pattern continues across the first week: more than half of providers cite introductions to team members as essential, but nearly 20% did not receive them.⁶

48%
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**learning protocols
& procedures**
as their biggest
onboarding hurdle

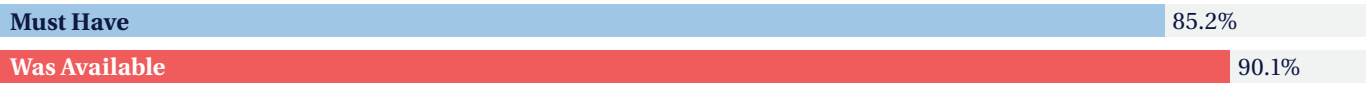
⁴ AAPPR, 11.

⁵ AAPPR, 19.

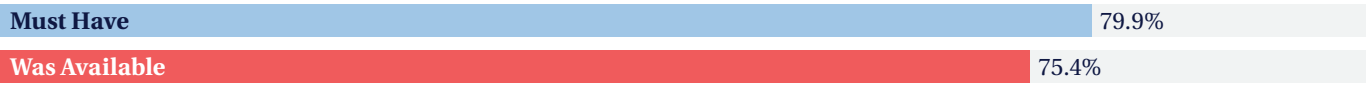
⁶ Ibid.

Provider Expectations vs. Onboarding Reality

Day One: Where to report & who to meet



Job Clarity: Overview of duties & expectations



Protocols: Facility procedures that apply to role





The implication is clear—providers are not only evaluating what is offered, but also how reliably and thoroughly it’s delivered. Addressing these shortfalls presents a clear opportunity to improve early engagement and strengthen retention outcomes. Structured touchpoints during the first 90 days are consistently associated with reduced early attrition—an issue that remains a key concern across healthcare facilities facing tight margins and high vacancy rates.

Low-Cost Solutions with High Impact

These programs don’t need to be resource intensive. Organizations have successfully implemented low-cost solutions such as peer buddy systems, internal learning management systems, and virtual welcome events. Additionally, guidance from the American Medical Association’s Steps Forward program underscores that effective onboarding must be more than administrative—it should establish a lasting framework of professional support. This includes early and sustained access to peer connections, formal mentorship opportunities, introductions to clinical and non-clinical leadership, and consistent reinforcement of institutional culture and values.⁷

These elements not only reduce the isolation new hires often feel but also foster stronger psychological safety and role clarity from the start. Providing clear visibility into available resources, guiding new hires through systems and cultural expectations, and assigning mentors who can offer hands-on advice and social support are all critical elements that shape a provider’s early impressions and longer-term engagement. These strategies create a sense of belonging without overextending limited HR resources.

And they matter—while compensation continues to dominate as the top motivator for career change, 11.6% of physicians in The Medicus Firm’s 2025 National Physician & Healthcare Provider Preference & Insights Survey cited ‘work environment’ as their primary reason for seeking a new opportunity. Compounding this challenge is the fact that 71% of providers report that their

⁷ AMA Ed Hub. (n.d.). Onboarding Optimization: Pave the Way for New Physician Success and Satisfaction. American Medical Association. Retrieved July 22, 2025, from <https://edhub.ama-assn.org/steps-forward/module/2832726>

Low-Cost Solutions with High Impact:

- 1 Peer Buddy System
- 2 Internal Learning Mgmt. Systems
- 3 Virtual Welcome Events

71%
of providers say
credentialing &
privileging
takes
3–4 months

“Effective onboarding must be more than administrative—it should establish a lasting framework of professional support.”



credentialing and privileging process takes three to four months to complete.⁸ These extended timelines introduce avoidable friction into the onboarding process—delaying access to care, dampening enthusiasm, and often placing providers in professional limbo during what should be a moment of momentum and connection. This category often includes elements shaped directly by onboarding experiences, such as early workplace culture impressions, administrative efficiency, and initial interactions with HR. A poorly executed or inconsistent onboarding process can unintentionally signal deeper issues, prompting candidates to disengage before their tenure even begins.

The Risks of Delayed Onboarding

While a strong onboarding process improves engagement, logistical and procedural delays can still undermine success. Streamlined organizational processes, including internal systems used to track applicants, play a critical role in sustaining onboarding momentum and setting clear expectations from the outset. One major contributing factor is the absence of an efficient applicant tracking system (ATS). Organizations without an ATS take, on average, 21% longer to fill open positions than those that use one—demonstrating how critical these systems are to maintaining hiring momentum and minimizing costly delays. Based on an average physician salary of \$280,000 annually, a 21% delay in a typical 100-day hiring timeline equates to approximately \$16,000 in lost productivity per search, underscoring the urgent need for operational efficiency in the recruitment process.⁹

⁸ AAPPR, 2024 Physician and Clinician Onboarding Research Report, 10.

⁹ Association for Advancing Physician and Provider Recruitment, AAPPR Internal Physician and Provider Recruitment Benchmarking Report: 2023 Annual Report (Dublin, OH: Industry Insights, 2023), 35, <https://www.aappr.org/resource/reports/>.



**Organizations
using an ATS**

fill roles

21%

faster

saving

\$16,000

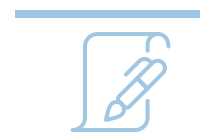
in productivity

per search



Starting Onboarding at the Point of Offer Acceptance

To mitigate these risks, onboarding must begin the moment an offer is accepted. However, 61% of providers report that onboarding doesn't begin until after a contract is signed—an approach that risks missing crucial early engagement opportunities.¹⁰ Onboarding should ideally begin earlier in the recruitment journey to establish trust, minimize ambiguity, and accelerate readiness. Employers should prioritize back-end coordination by aligning credentialing and licensing workflows, streamlining document requests, and preparing internal teams to welcome the new hire. Candidates, in turn, benefit from early access to training portals, team introductions, and personalized roadmaps that guide their transition from contract signing to immediate clinical productivity—unburdened by messy credentialing timelines, fragmented communication, or unexpected administrative roadblocks.



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¹⁰ Association for Advancing Physician and Provider Recruitment (AAPPR), 2024 Physician and Clinician Onboarding Research Report, 17.

From First Impressions to Long-Term Success

To transform hiring into a true driver of organizational success, healthcare leaders must focus on three critical actions:

- **Start early and stay consistent:** Onboarding should begin at offer acceptance, with clear timelines, proactive communication, and reliable follow-through.
- **Bridge gaps between intent and experience:** Providers often report receiving less support than organizations claim to provide—closing this gap is essential for trust and retention.
- **Prioritize connection and culture:** Peer support, mentorship, and visible alignment with organizational values reduce isolation, build belonging, and sustain long-term engagement.

About The Medicus Firm

Established in 2001, **The Medicus Firm** is a national healthcare recruitment company with a mission to save lives through teamwork and the relentless pursuit of excellence. We focus on delivering the most efficient and effective services to hospitals and healthcare employers throughout the United States. Through our four divisions, Physician Search, Academic Search, Allied & Dental Search, and Community & Tribal Search, we are dedicated to finding the right provider or leader for all our clients. As part of the **M3 USA family**, The Medicus Firm has access to millions of active providers and leaders committed to market research, continuing education, clinical research, and professional enrichment. Our commitment to excellence has been recognized by winning **ClearlyRated's Best of Staffing® Client Award** fourteen times. To learn more, please visit **TheMedicusFirm.com**.



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