



## SHOULD YOUR SLEEP LAB HAVE AN EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK?

by Duane Johnson PhD

An employee handbook, also referred to as a personnel manual, is a popular tool and can be an effective way to communicate sleep lab employer expectations, as well as employee benefits. This is different from the technical policies and procedures manual, which is a requirement for AASM and Joint Commission sleep lab accreditation.

Employee handbooks foster better and more accurate communication between employers and employees. Communication is at the heart of all relationships and, typically, the better your communication, the better your relationships

will be. And the better your sleep team relationship, the better and more effectively your team functions.

For example, a personnel policy can delineate proper and improper sleep employee behavior. The personnel manual can also serve by providing a uniform source of employment-related information for all sleep lab employees. This fair, unvarying, equal treatment of all employees can promote employee commitment and increased morale when implemented correctly.

However, if the employee handbook is not carefully written and consistently maintained with up-to-date information that complies with both state and federal laws, it can create problems and contractual obligations where none were intended.


It is important to note that if a sleep lab employer has written an employee policy, the employer must be capable as well as be willing to consistently implement it. For example, if the handbook states that each sleep lab employee will receive a performance evaluation annually then that sleep lab employer should be prepared to do that annual performance evaluation.

The information a sleep service employer chooses to include in the employee handbook is critical. If certain information is chosen and written properly, the personnel manual can actually become part of an employer/employee contract. On the other hand, the handbook can be written in a way that consists of only general statements of policy.

When writing handbook policies, it is important to know when to write specifically and when to be more general. Otherwise a court could determine the sleep lab policy a "promise" to employees and rule against an employer should an employee file a complaint or a lawsuit, especially in cases of dismissal or employee discipline. Disclaimers should be used in the handbook to further avoid misunderstanding of what a policy means.

It is important to distribute the employee handbook to every employee and have each sign an acknowledgement that they have received it and will abide by the personnel policies. That signed acknowledgement should be kept in the employee's personnel folder along with their written job description, employee application, verification for eligibility of employment, references and other job-related materials.

It is also important to have a clause that expressly identifies all former employee handbooks or related policies by title and date declaring they are no longer effective when personnel poli-



**Sleep Center Management Institute**  
*Improving the Business Of Sleep™*

**SCMI is the premier resource for educational products, training and consultative advisory services for professional sleep managers.**

SCMI's Advisory Team of sleep management consulting specialists uses its **100+ years of combined** experience to assist sleep management professionals to provide superior patient service while maximizing financial returns.

**SCMI CONSULTING SERVICES:**

- DO IT YOURSELF SLEEP LAB STARTUP
- FULL SERVICE SLEEP LAB STARTUP
- AASM & JCAHO SLEEP LAB ACCREDITATION PREPARATION
- JCAHO SLEEP DME ACCREDITATION PREPARATION
- SLEEP DME STARTUP & COMPETITIVE BIDDING
- SLEEP LAB MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
- PERIOPERATIVE SLEEP APNEA MANAGEMENT (SAM) TRAINING AND START-UP PROGRAMS
- WEBINAR TRAINING

Sleep Center Management Institute  
5076 Winters Chapel Road  
Atlanta, Georgia 30360  
1-888-556-2203  
www.sleepcmi.com

Focus Booths  
124 & 126

**CIRCLE READER ACTION CARD # 36**

**Employee Handbook...** *Continued from previous page*

cy changes are made. All sleep lab employees must then sign an up-to-date acknowledgement of receiving this change and their written acknowledgement should be documented in their employee personnel file.

The following are personnel policies you may want to consider for your employee handbook:

Equal employee opportunity statement, Initial employment period, Personnel records, Sleep center patient service standards, Performance appraisal process, Communications, Work week/schedule, Overtime, Breaks, Pay periods, Recording time/hours, Compensation review, Payroll deductions, Benefits, Holidays, Personal time off, Leave of absence, Family leave, Bereavement, Jury duty, Military, Time to vote, Safety/weapons, Dress standards, Confidentiality, Duplication of PC/software/Internet, Offensive behavior, Sexual harassment, Tobacco/drug policy, Tardiness/absenteeism, Legal and ethical behaviors, Conduct/corrective action, Voluntary termination and Involuntary termination

This list is by no means exhaustive of what can be in your employee handbook. It is always imperative to have your sleep lab legal counsel review the topics and brief policy statements in your personnel manual to be sure any legal state and federal policy requirements have not been overlooked or written incorrectly.

A well-written sleep lab employee handbook is an effective employee communication tool and relationship builder that assists the employee in knowing what the sleep lab employer expects from the employee. It will eliminate many misunderstandings and help avoid costly time spent resolving everyday issues that may even keep you as an employer or employee out of court.

*Duane M. Johnson, PhD, is co-founder and senior partner of Sleep Center Management Institute in Atlanta; djohnson@sleepcmi.com*

**Student Paper...** *continued from page 52*

also lays the crucial neurodevelopmental foundation for learning language and communication. Wearing the Passy-Muir Valve restores the ability of the infant or child to vocalize, thereby allowing them to perform these important vocal behaviors. In addition to allowing vocalization, this valve may also improve swallowing ability in the pediatric as well as the adult patient.

Some advantages of the speaking valve are speech improvement, swallowing improvement, decreasing secretions (requiring less suctioning), improved smell (increasing appetite), improved quality of life, directed air flow through the mouth and nose; (patients can blow their nose and spit up secretions). It can also be used with oxygen, humidity and ventilators. It also improves speech by allowing natural voicing, normal speech patterns and louder vocal intensity. Patients using a speaking valve usually can speak for longer periods of time than without a speaking valve.

Without this device, a patient's communication options are limited. They would have to use picture or word communication boards, magic slate writing board, or simple gestures with a corresponding key for staff/family to interpret.

The cost of the Passy-Muir Tracheostomy Speaking Valve ranges from \$108.00 to \$185.00 US dollars - a small price to pay to give someone a voice they would otherwise not have.

**Visit Great Lakes Orthodontics ~ Booth 102**

**FOCUS Conference • May 14-16, 2009 • Orlando, Florida**

**Meet the experts in  
Oral Appliance Therapy**

**Dr. Gary Greenberg  
Christina LaJoie**



**Learn more about:**

- **Klearway™ Appliance**
- **Herbst® Sleep Appliance\***
- **Tongue Stabilizing Device (TSD)**

*and effective treatment options  
for patients identified at risk for  
sleep-disordered breathing.*

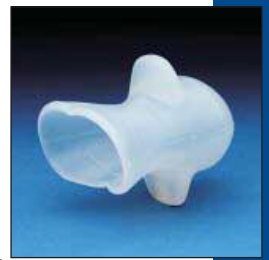
**For more information contact  
Christina LaJoie: 866.781.5073  
cmlajoie@greatlakesortho.com**



**Great Lakes**

ORTHODONTICS, LTD.  
An Employee Owned Company

[www.greatlakesortho.com](http://www.greatlakesortho.com)



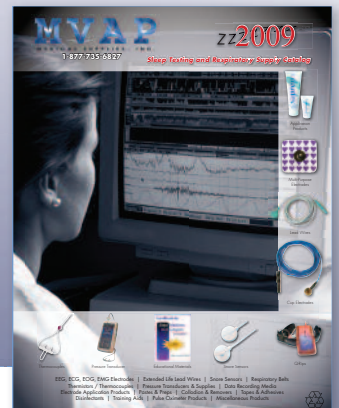
SMLP 241Rev031809 \*Herbst is a registered trademark of Dentaaurum, Inc.

**CIRCLE READER ACTION CARD # 37**

Focus  
Booth  
123

**MVAP**  
MEDICAL SUPPLIES, INC.

The MVAP 2009  
Sleep Testing Supplies  
catalog is filled with new  
and exciting products  
at fantastic prices!  
Call today to request  
our free catalog.



**MVAP**  
MEDICAL SUPPLIES, INC.



Our ecommerce website is loaded with new products and bargains, which are updated daily! With over 4,000 items, we're sure you'll find everything you need.

**MVAP Medical Supplies, Inc.**

1415 Lawrence Drive, Newbury Park, CA 91320  
Toll Free: 1-877-735-MVAP (6827) | Toll Free Fax: 1-877-735-7213 | [www.mvapmed.com](http://www.mvapmed.com)

**CIRCLE READER ACTION CARD # 38**