SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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A Therapist's Guide to Evaluating New Employment Opportunities

Looking for a new role?

Seeking employment as a virtual therapist can be daunting. There are a range of job options available, and hundreds of employers looking for quality mental health providers. The ATA Telementalhealth Special Interest Group (SIG) has collaborated on this guide to support mental health providers in making the best employment decision for their individual situation. This guide is not intended as an exhaustive list of evaluation criteria, but rather as a starting point for questions and information that you may want to consider when deciding which position and company are best for you.

1. COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Transparency around compensation and benefits builds trust between employees and employers and promotes fairness and equity within an organization. Understanding the details of the compensation package that a company is offering will allow you to make the best decision on the aspects of pay and benefits that are most important to you.

Questions to consider:

- What is the starting salary range for this role?

- Is this position paid as a 1099 or W2 employee?

- Is there a bonus structure? How is payment of the bonus determined?

- How are therapists compensated for administrative/ documentation time? No-show clients?

- What benefits are provided? PTO? Medical Insurance and, if so, out of pocket costs?

- Do I have to sign a non-compete clause? Am I able to have dual employment?

- Do you provide malpractice insurance?

2. TRAINING/EDUCATION

Training and education are important for new employees to learn and be confident in their new company's policies, procedures, technology, and company practices. Learning and development can increase employee retention, job satisfaction, and productivity. It is an important aspect of initial onboarding but should also be an ongoing part of a therapist's professional development.

Questions to consider:

- What does your onboarding process look like?

- Is training provided to clinicians before seeing clients? If yes, approximately how many hours?

- Do you have an ongoing education and professional development plan? Do you cover the cost for CEUs?

- Will I be expected to go through a credentialing process?

3. CLIENT POPULATION

Understanding a company's patient population is important in making an employment decision. Some clinicians may not feel comfortable or qualified to work with a certain subpopulation, or may have a particular population or patient category that they are most experienced or passionate about serving.

Questions to consider:

- What patient populations are in the scope of practice (e.g., children, adolescents, adults, older adults)?
- What is the referral process for me as a provider? Am I expected to generate my clients/patients?
- How are patients screened for appropriateness for telehealth? And what happens if they are not a good fit?

4. STANDARDS OF CARE / EXPECTATIONS

Learning about a company's standards of care provides insight into quality of care, alignment with evidence-based treatments, outcomes tracking, and protocols for managing clients/patients in crisis. The support, tools and time provided to you for delivering care efficiently are important to ensure safe clinical practice. Understanding the expectations outside of direct clinical time is an important consideration for fair compensation and work-life balance. Learning about expectations and administrative support for billing and coding, technical difficulties, scheduling, communications management, and prescription refill support are all important considerations.

Questions to consider:

- What are your patient safety event/escalation protocols?
- What outcomes data do you regularly track?
- How many hours per week are therapists expected to provide patient-facing, direct clinical services?
- What are the administrative and documentation requirements and is that time compensated?
- Am I responsible for Case Management/follow-up? Is that time compensated?

5. CLINICIAN SUPPORT

Continued improvement in clinical competencies through peer consultation is a key component of professional development for mental health clinicians. Learning about the opportunities for collaboration, support for professional development and support during challenging cases for clinician wellbeing serve as good indicators of company's investment in their clinicians' professional and personal growth.

Questions to consider:

- How does the organization support collaboration between clinicians?
- How does the organization support the mental health of their clinicians?
- What opportunities and resources are there for professional growth including, but not limited to continuing education?
- Who will be my clinical supervisor? How frequent will we have communication/meetings? How frequently will I be evaluated?
- Do you have clinicians get additional state licenses? How do you support that process for your clinicians?

6. DEI/CULTURAL COMPETENCE

A strong Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program ensures that all employees, clinicians included, have an equitable experience and opportunities for growth, pay fairness, and job satisfaction. Culturally Competent and Responsive Care increases patient outcomes and the overall quality of care.

Questions to consider:

- How is diversity, equity, and inclusion integrated in the company?
- How does your organization ensure your clinicians provide culturally competent care to their patients?
- How do you provide care to patients whose first language is not English?

7. TELEHEALTH TECHNOLOGY

Awareness and experience with electronic health records and digital tools are important for clinicians to provide efficient clinical care. If the tools are unfamiliar, then training in using those tools and accessing technical support if needed will allow you to focus on delivering care instead of navigating and problem solving tech issues.

Questions to consider:

- What format will I be providing services (e.g., via video teletherapy, phone, chat, mixed)?
- What technology platform/electronic medical record (EMR)/electronic health record (EHR) is used? Is training provided?
- What technical support is available should I need technical assistance?

RESEARCHING A COMPANY

Where do you find the answers to these questions?

Information on a company and their employment practices can be found in a variety of places.

- Ask questions during the interview process
- Review the company website
- Review the company on employment websites (e.g., LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Indeed, etc.)
- Review Third party articles and publications
- Current employees and alumni

Good luck with your search!