



# Setting Up for Success: Your Practice Launchpad

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An EHR is the backbone of a medical practice. Without an innovative and dynamic platform, staff time is not only wasted on manual tasks, but providers also compromise on patient care and lose out on revenue opportunities due to burdensome workloads.

But before kicking off the EHR search, you'll have to check off a handful of important to-dos off your list. Keep in mind, most of these steps can take anywhere from several weeks to several months to complete, so it's best to get started as soon as possible to avoid unnecessary delays.



# Your Practice Checklist

Opening a practice requires completing several important tasks. Since many of these steps can take weeks or even months, it's crucial to begin as early as possible to avoid delays. Here are some of the things you'll need to consider. **For more information on each item, click to Learn More.**

Obtain your state medical license and relevant board certifications.

[Learn More >](#)

Apply for an NPI number for billing, documentation, and prescribing purposes.

[Learn More >](#)

Get DEA registered if you plan to prescribe controlled substances.

[Learn More >](#)

Secure an office lease that is suitable for your practice.

[Learn More >](#)

Complete business registration and facility licensing requirements.

[Learn More >](#)

Purchase medical malpractice insurance.

[Learn More >](#)

Identify insurance carriers you plan to bill and get credentialed.

[Learn More >](#)

Set up a bank account and credit card processor.

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Develop a staffing plan for billing, practice management, and clinical duties.

[Learn More >](#)

Create a marketing plan to get new patients.

[Learn More >](#)

## Obtain a State Medical License and Board Certifications

Running a medical practice hinges on obtaining a valid medical license. Securing other necessary credentials, like payer contracts, facility licensing, and malpractice insurance, is virtually impossible without one. It can take anywhere from a few weeks to a couple months to receive approval, so be sure to get started on this process immediately.

First, check out if your state participates in the [Uniform Application for Licensure](#), which helps streamline the process if individuals want to apply in multiple states. However, not all states participate, so you'll want to verify the specific requirements with your state board. In all cases, expect to at least provide medical school records, including exam scores and diplomas, as well as postgraduate training verification.

Make sure you also consult with any relevant specialty-specific boards to obtain the necessary certifications as well, as this will be particularly important for insurance credentialing.

## Apply for an NPI Number

A National Provider Identifier (NPI) number is not only necessary for prescribing medication or billing insurance, but it's also an important identifier when medical records, such as referrals or clinical documentation, are shared electronically.

Providers can apply for free through the [National Plan & Provider Enumeration System](#) — which is part of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) — or you can work with a third-party CMS contractor to help with the process.

Expect to submit personal information, such as your Social Security Number, as well as a provider taxonomy code, which you can select from the [National Uniform Claim Committee](#) code set list based on your provider type and specialization.



## Get DEA Registered

If your practice plans to prescribe controlled substances, you'll need Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) licensure. Make sure your state licensing credentials are already in place before applying. Once you're ready, you can apply on the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) website and select the DEA form most applicable to your practice.

Each state may have their own additional requirements or processes for prescribing controlled substances, so be sure to check with the relevant medical boards to ensure you're not missing any steps.

Expect your DEA registration application to take anywhere from four to eight weeks from the time of application submission to be fully processed.



## Secure an Office Lease

Unless you plan to run a fully remote practice, actively look for office space while you're waiting for your license, NPI or other necessary registrations to come through. That will minimize delays as you wait for potential health facility or insurance-related inspections.

## Complete Business Registration and Facility Licensing

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Go through your state's business registration process and select the business structure that is right for your practice, whether it's a sole proprietorship, partnership or professional corporation, and obtain an employer identification number if applicable.

To open a medical clinic, you'll likely need to obtain a health facility license from your state, often through a public health department. Make sure you check your state's specific mandates on how to open a fully compliant office. Because you will likely be subject to inspections, the physical practice should be close to its full operating condition by this point.

## Purchase Medical Malpractice Insurance

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Not all states require malpractice insurance, but it is highly recommended and is often mandatory for insurance credentialing.

Selecting the right type of limits and plan can be complicated, so meeting with a broker or consultant can help determine what is best for your needs. Most malpractice policies fall into one of two categories: claims-made and occurrence-made.

Claims-made policies only cover claims if the incident occurred, and the lawsuit was filed while the policy was in effect. Occurrence-made policies cover claims if the policy was in effect when the treatment or incident in question took place, even if the policy is not currently active.

## Get Credentialed with Payers

Payer contracting can be time-consuming, and it also requires a strategic approach.

First, identify the insurance companies you'd like to work with. To do this, it's helpful to consider the plans that are most common in your area and the type of coverage your prospective patients are most likely to have.

Which types of carriers do the large employers in your area work with? Is the population you intend to serve heavily reliant on government-based plans, like Medicare and Medicaid, or will most use private insurance?

While there is a lot of overlap in each private insurer's application, each company's is slightly different.

If you plan to bill Medicare, apply via the [Provider Enrollment, Chain and Ownership System \(PECOS\)](#). And if you plan to accept Medicaid, reach out to your state's plan for specific instructions on how to do so.

You can usually find the required application information by visiting each organization's website, but generally, expect to provide medical license information, NPI number, board certifications, medical school and training records, malpractice insurance, and a comprehensive work history.

Depending on the type of practice you plan to operate, you should also expect to have, or be close to signing, a lease. After verifying and approving your application information, insurers may request a site visit to ensure your practice complies with their standards.

Before signing the contract, thoroughly review the reimbursement rates and other billing terms to ensure they are operationally and financially viable for your practice. This process can also take several months so be sure to get started as soon as possible.



## Set Up a Bank Account and Credit Card Processor

You'll also need to set up a bank account and a credit card processing system. Payment processing in the healthcare industry is more complicated than most sectors, so [selecting the right company to work](#) with is paramount.

The company you select must comply with the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#) (HIPAA) and the [Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard](#) (PCI DSS). The processor should also be able to seamlessly integrate with EHR and practice management systems.

When submitting your application for payment processing, have the following information on hand:



Tax ID



Financial statements



Bank account information



Business license



Estimated monthly credit card transactions



Any possible additional documentation

## Develop a Staffing Plan

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Whether you plan to run a solo office or a multi-location practice, determine who is responsible for billing and practice management tasks, such as scheduling and intake.

This is especially important as you get closer to purchasing an EHR, as any staff who will work with the new system — whether it's in a clinical, financial or operational capacity — should undergo implementation training. This in-depth process is typically offered at the beginning of each contract period, and while most platforms offer ongoing customer support, the knowledge gained during the [EHR implementation process](#) is invaluable and will set your practice up for success early on.

## Create a Marketing Plan to Get New Patients

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Providers might not prioritize marketing when opening a practice. But while you wait for application approvals, you should simultaneously work on a plan to get patients in the door. That starts with the basics like creating a modern and informative website, so prospective patients know about the services you provide.

You don't need to have a fully baked marketing plan in place before starting your EHR search. But it is a good idea to start thinking about the demographics you serve and how that will impact your approach.

For older adults, you may want to focus on a mix of word-of-mouth, digital and print advertisements, while younger generations may be more receptive to social media messaging. Identify some platforms that can integrate with EHRs, like EverConnect and Socius, to help you get started.

Once you check these necessary steps, it's time to [start the EHR search](#) and begin operating your new practice!

**DrChrono offers you the opportunity to practice medicine, not administration.**

Focus on what matters most when opening your practice.

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