

Lessons from leaders: The group practice guide

Advice from founders who've scaled, hired, and led
successful mental health teams



Introduction

Maybe you've always dreamed of owning and operating a group therapy practice. Maybe you've met fellow providers throughout your career who complement your skills — and you knew you'd be stronger as a care team versus going it alone. Or maybe you're mission-driven and operating a group practice is the best way to serve your community.

No matter your path to group practice ownership, it's likely been paved with ups and downs: the joy of a successful launch, the frustration of finding the right systems and tools, the thrill of expanding to serve more people. And many more experiences in between.

Indeed, group practice owners have a unique perspective on running a successful therapy practice. So we asked a number of experts, with varying backgrounds, niche areas, and business mindsets, to share the lessons they've learned on their journeys. Their expertise not only lays a solid foundation for other owners to build on, but also validates that behind every success story is resilience, community, and yes, mistakes.

With their guidance, we hope you'll walk away feeling empowered to scale with intention, choose the right tools to sustain your practice, foster deeper connections with your clinicians and clients, and discover new methods for long-term stability and growth.



Meet the experts



Brigid Gannon

DNP, PMHNP-BC, and Co-Founder of
Lavender Psychiatry



Joe Sanok

Keynote and TEDx speaker, business
consultant, and podcaster of the #1
podcast for counselors, The Practice of
the Practice Podcast.



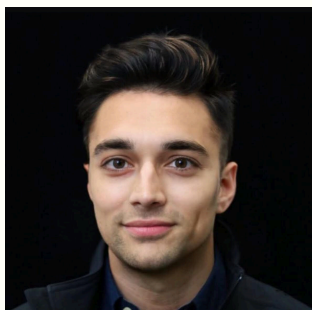
Kira Torre

LMFT, Chief Clinical Officer at Ever After
Individual & Family Therapy



Emily Daubenmire

Chief Operating Officer at Ever After
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Ari Syed

Founder of Dua Health

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Lesson 1: Build for scale from day one

From creating a business plan to marketing your practice, owners have myriad decisions to make when it comes to getting up and running. In the throes of launching a practice, establishing processes and procedures might slip down your list of priorities. However, consistent policies, clinical procedures, and a focus on compliance protect you as you grow.

“Whether you’re a solo practitioner or an established group practice, the expectation that you have policies and procedures is the same for all providers,” said Brigid Gannon, DNP, PMHNP-BC, and Co-Founder of Lavender Psychiatry — a hybrid psychiatric practice that provides both talk therapy and medication management through a team of psychiatric nurse practitioners.

“At Lavender, we’ve behaved like a bigger practice from the very beginning. We took the work seriously and had everything in place. That set us up for success as we scaled.”

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Brigid Gannon
DNP, PMHNP-BC, and Co-Founder
of Lavender Psychiatry

At a minimum, all providers in your practice should have:

- ✓ **State license(s)** that are active and up to date (unless they are associates under licensed supervision)
- ✓ **NPI and CAQH profile**
- ✓ **Policies** for documentation and informed consent
- ✓ **Secure EHR software** with the practice
- ✓ **Malpractice insurance** with prescribing coverage (i.e., \$1 million per incident; \$3 million per aggregate; \$100,000-\$300,000 if you practice in Florida)
- ✓ **Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) enrollment**

In addition to the left, psychiatric providers should have:

- ✓ **Board certification in psychiatry** required for their role (ABPN, ANCC, etc.)
- ✓ **Collaborating physician** if you’re a PMHNP in a state that requires one
- ✓ **Administrative Policies** for prior authorizations
- ✓ **Clinical Policies** for side effects and medication refills
- ✓ **DEA license** required for each state in which you practice

- ✓ **State-controlled substance license** if required in your state
- ✓ **Secure e-prescribe software**
- ✓ **Controlled substance policy** for your practice (not a requirement, but highly recommended)
- ✓ **Established substance use screener** for new patient intake (not a requirement, but highly recommended)

Then, establish repeatable processes for things like scheduling, onboarding, and billing. Doing so helps create consistency across your practice and prevent provider burnout.

“Starting with a solid foundation made it easier for us to grow from one to more than 200 psychiatric nurse practitioners — all while maintaining consistency and safety,” said Gannon.

And when it comes to tools, choose scalable technology that offers flexibility as you grow. Systems that are too fixed can stall growth, while others that are too robust can create errors that are easy to miss.

[Read more](#) about Ever After Individual & Family Therapy who, after partnering with Headway, quickly grew their practice to bill more than 150 sessions per week — and spent 50% less time on insurance and verification.

“As a practice owner, you have to recognize when tools aren’t serving you,” said Emily Daubenmire, Chief Operating Officer at Ever After Individual & Family Therapy. “Be willing to pivot, even if transitions feel risky. It took us two years and three EHRs before we found the Goldilocks solution that was scalable, but not overwhelming.”

“Recognize when tools aren’t serving you. Be willing to pivot, even if transitions feel risky.”



Emily Daubenmire
Chief Operating Officer at Ever After Individual & Family Therapy



Emily Daubenmire and Kira Torre of Ever After Individual & Family Therapy, facilitating an event with Headway, September 2024.

Lesson 2: Hire for values to grow with intention

As a practice owner, you might not have experience with recruitment and hiring. Our experts have been in your shoes and faced similar unknowns. So, we asked them: When is it the right time to hire?

“Hire ahead of demand,” advised Joe Sanok, keynote and TEDx speaker, business consultant, and podcaster. “Bring on new providers before you’re at capacity, since growth often outpaces hiring timelines.”

Sanok recommends a specific formula: hiring when your practice’s client load is at 60% capacity. In his experience, a hiring process can take up to six weeks — at which point, your team’s workload will have increased even further.

That brings us to another question: How can you ensure you’re bringing on the right people?

“Establish your values early,” said Sanok. “Clearly defined values help attract team members who align with your practice’s style and mission. Some providers want a group culture that believes in doing good work — and then going home. Others may want to focus on community impact. Defining your values will attract the right folks to your practice.”

Your practice’s values may vary. Helping newer therapists grow with supervision, seeking diversity in your staff’s specialties and experience, partnering with local organizations or causes — whatever they may be, identifying and living out your values as a provider and a practice owner will help bring an intentional, shared culture to your business.

Kira Torre, LMFT, Chief Clinical Officer at Ever After Individual & Family Therapy, has experienced the benefits of values-driven hiring firsthand.

“We’ve been very intentional about hiring providers who share our values, but also offer a diversity of services at the same time,” she said. “Hiring providers from different backgrounds and with complementary areas of expertise allows us to expand what our practice can offer, while still staying true to our mission.”

Ari Syed, Founder of Dua Health — a modern, online therapy platform focused on delivering specialized care — echoed his colleagues’ sentiment.

“We look for candidates who are passionate about providing care to historically underserved communities and prioritize those who have experience or a connection to those communities,” shared Syed. “Our values-driven approach has helped us be successful in attracting qualified providers who understand and are aligned with the communities they serve.”

“Clearly defined values help attract team members who align with your practice’s style and mission.”



Joe Sanok

Keynote and TEDx speaker, business consultant, and podcaster



Lesson 3: Gain a strategic advantage with team culture and growth opportunities

Attracting and retaining top talent is a growing challenge for all group practices. As such, many owners expressed the need to set your practice apart in a competitive market.

“We’ve invested heavily in our team’s growth, which has helped us not only differentiate ourselves in a competitive market for talent, but also become an employer of choice,” said Gannon. “We host annual retreats — which really help bring our remote team together. We also host social events, take part in volunteer activities, and encourage team members to socialize with our ‘Lunch on Lavender’ program.”

Lavender also has a mentorship program where new graduates are paired with a mentor (in addition to a lead nurse practitioner) on their first day. Mentees meet with their mentors weekly for one-on-one clinical supervision to talk about clinical work. This safe space helps foster a culture of learning.

“We’re also committed to ongoing education,” said Gannon. “We host multiple ANCC-accredited events each month. Investing in professional growth — and having fun together — has helped us retain staff while competitors struggle with churn.”

At Ever After Therapy, Torre and Daubenmire focus on matching clients with the right providers based on their expertise and values. This strategy has proven effective in both client and provider retention.

“As a leader, I prioritize my providers’ boundaries,” said Torre. “If they don’t want to work with a specific client group, I respect that. Respect is paramount. I know that if I take care of my providers, they will take care of our clients.”

In addition to flexible scheduling, some practice owners attract and retain providers with a flexible staffing model and pay structure.

“We employ a combination of full-time and part-time providers,” shared Daubenmire. “We also offer both W-2 and 1099 options to give therapists flexibility — while still covering our overhead costs.”

In Sanok’s work with his own clients (i.e., practice owners), he encourages them to invest in growth opportunities for their staff. Like Torre, he also preaches flexibility in order to attract and retain your talent.

“Continuing education and mentorship opportunities help build loyalty and keep clinicians engaged,” he said. “But today’s practice owners must also adapt to generational shifts to retain talent. For example, younger clinicians prioritize balance. They want flexible scheduling and shorter work weeks.”

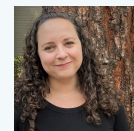
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Brigid Gannon

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Kira Torre

LMFT, Chief Clinical Officer at Ever After Individual & Family Therapy

TIP

Help your team grow their skills and fulfill continuing education license requirements with Headway Academy. With Headway, you can access over 200 hours of CEUs through our partnerships with PESI, Violet, and the Eating Recovery Center.

[Learn more](#)

Lesson 4: Delegate to free up your time to focus on meaningful work

Running a growing group practice today often means playing part-time insurance coordinator, part-time biller, and full-time therapist. When the administrative burden feels too time-consuming, many group practices stitch together solutions that aren’t built for their needs.

Therein lies the lesson experienced practice owners have learned.

“Don’t try to wear every hat,” advised Sanok. “As a practice owner, operator, and clinician, you can’t also do all the billing, marketing, social media, and clinical work forever. You have to delegate or outsource as you scale.”



Make delegation your superpower

TASK	HOW TO DELEGATE
Marketing and client acquisition	Hire or contract with a marketing consultant to handle search engine optimization, social media, and blog content. You can also use tools to automate posting and measure website analytics for tracking leads.
Scheduling and client communication	Employ an administrative assistant or client care coordinator to manage phone calls, intake paperwork, and appointment scheduling. You can also automate appointment booking, reminders, and cancellations through scheduling software with client portals and SMS/email reminders.
Billing and insurance management	Automatically submit claims, bill patients, and manage complications with practice management tools that integrate insurance verification and payment tracking.
Practice operations	Appoint an operations manager to oversee HR, compliance, and workflow optimization. Adopt project management tools and analytics dashboards built into EHR systems for tracking utilization, revenue, and clinician productivity.

That's where
Headway comes in.

“Headway helps alleviate the burden of administrative work, allowing me to concentrate on clinical operations and patient care. With tasks such as credentialing, billing, and scheduling in Headway’s capable hands, I can focus on our core mission of providing specialized care.”

Ari Syed
Founder of Dua Health



Like Syed, Daubenmire uses Headway to offload administrative work, such as credentialing — freeing up their time to focus on expanding their practice’s reach and client engagement.

However, Ever After Therapy has taken delegation one step further, separating business operations from clinical care. While Torre focuses on the latter, Daubenmire manages non-clinical aspects like compliance, billing, and scheduling.

“Our model takes some of the pressure off managing multiple aspects of the business,” said Daubenmire. “It also improves client retention, because our providers can focus on delivering great care, without having to also talk about money.”

TIP

Looking for ways to get more time back in your schedule? Headway helps practice owners streamline administrative tasks, so that you have more time to focus on team leadership, culture, and morale.

[Learn more](#)

Lesson 5: Explore multiple revenue streams to boost practice stability



In addition to providing direct care, Daubenmire and Torre are always on the lookout for new opportunities that align with their mission and values — and support their longevity.

“From supervision to continuing education programs to tech advising, we’re actively exploring additional revenue streams to support our financial growth,” shared Daubenmire.

And they recommend other practice owners to do the same.

Alternative revenue streams for group practice owners

Unsure of what revenue streams could bolster your practice’s growth? Here are some common avenues you could explore beyond direct care:

- Supervision and consultation:** Offering paid supervision for early-career clinicians or consulting to other providers starting practices.
- Specialized programs:** Group therapy (e.g., parenting support or substance use recovery), workshops, or intensives.
- Testing and assessments:** Psychological evaluations, ADHD or autism testing, or other specialized assessments.
- Continuing Education (CE) courses:** Many states require clinicians to earn CEs; group practices can create training programs and become CE providers.

- Workshops for professionals:** Clinical skill trainings (e.g., trauma therapy, EMDR, or art therapy) or practice management topics (think: billing, marketing, or scaling).
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) partnerships:** Providing mental health support through employer contracts.
- Corporate wellness programs:** Workshops, coaching, or ongoing therapy contracts with companies looking to support employee wellbeing.
- School or university partnerships:** Providing embedded counseling or outsourced services to schools, colleges, or student groups.

- Self-guided programs:** Online courses, workbooks, or recorded workshops for clients.
- Digital products:** Guided journals, meditations, or therapy-adjacent resources.
- Books or other publications:** Turn your expertise into publishable content.
- Practice consulting:** Helping other clinicians start or grow their own practices.
- Speaking engagements:** Paid keynotes, conferences, and panels.
- Retreats:** Combining wellness and clinician training in a premium format.

Sanok, a multi-hyphenate by nature, echoed their advice — sharing that his journey has taken him from community mental health provider to a full-time practice owner to successful podcaster and consultant. At times, he balances multiple roles at once.

When exploring new revenue streams, Sanok advises owners to stay curious and to pay attention to what others ask for your help with.

“Stay adaptable,” he said. “Doing so will help keep your practice both sustainable and innovative — a must in today’s competitive landscape.”

Of course, it’s wise to do your due diligence. Seek professional legal guidance to ensure your practice and all its revenue streams are compliant with state and federal regulations.

Tools and resources for group practice owners

Books and podcasts

[The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth about Extraordinary Results](#) by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan

[Profit First for Therapists: A Simple Framework for Financial Freedom](#) by Julie Herres

[Practice of the Practice Podcast](#) by Joe Sanok

[Guerilla Marketing for Direct Selling](#) by Jay Conrad Levinson, James Dillehay, and Marcella Vonn Harting

[The Group Practice Exchange](#) podcast by Maureen Werrbach Hermann

[Selling the Couch](#) podcast by Melvin Varghese, PHD

Business resources

[Session Sites](#) and [Squarespace](#) for creating a website for your practice

[Fiverr](#) for creative needs (like a logo)

Guidance and continuing education

[The Practice Academy](#)

[Headway Academy](#) and [free CE courses](#) through Headway

What’s your #1 piece of advice for group practice owners?

“Being a leader means navigating a lot of gray areas and tough decisions. Know your values and go back to them often. They’re your North Star, and will help you deal with the challenges that come your way.”

Brigid Gannon, DNP, PMHNP-BC,
and Co-Founder of Lavender Psychiatry



“Growth always involves risk — whether that’s investing in new staff, pivoting systems, or expanding services — but calculated risks fuel momentum.”

Joe Sanok, keynote and TEDx speaker,
business consultant, and podcaster



“Trust your instincts. Whether it’s hiring new folks or choosing the right tools, trust yourself to know what’s best for your practice.”

Kira Torre, LMFT, Chief Clinical Officer
at Ever After Individual & Family Therapy



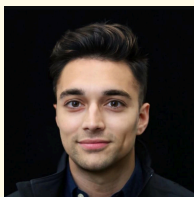
“Create pathways for your providers to grow. Not every clinician wants to be a group practice owner. Offering continuing education and supervisory opportunities supports practice sustainability and provider happiness.”

Emily Daubenmire, Chief Operating Officer
at Ever After Individual & Family Therapy



“Network. Build community with other practice owners. Book 10-minute meet and greets; talk through your mutual frustrations. It’s all about finding people who understand what you’re going through and can lean on throughout the journey.”

Ari Syed, Founder of Dua Health



Grow your group practice with confidence

Headway's platform is built to help group practices easily accept insurance at scale, with minimal overhead costs and less administrative stress.

Ready to power your group practice? No signup fees.
No membership required.

[Learn more](#)

As a group practice on Headway, you can count on:

- 1 Competitive per-session rates across your team
- 2 Free credentialing for your whole team in as little as 30 days
- 3 Insurance verification, billing, and bi-weekly payments for worry-free payroll
- 4 Practice management tools for administrators
- 5 Intuitive provider portal with optional EHR included



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