

Nurses eating their travelers

Question:

We talk about eating our young in nursing, but what about eating the travelers? I am just completing a 13-week assignment at a hospital that utilizes a lot of travelers. People outside and within the unit where I work have commented about how the travelers are treated [negatively] and then wonder why the travelers won't renew their contract. It is a crying shame that this type of behavior has to be tolerated. I have even talked to my recruiter about this. She has told me that they have a hard time getting nurses to go this particular hospital. When travelers get an assignment like this, what can travelers do to protect themselves?

Reply:

Unfortunately, the concept to nurses eating their young still exists to some degree. A traveler is similar to a new nurse in that they don't know the facility or its norms. Rather than being welcomed and shown around, some places will let you sink or swim. However, nurses treat their newcomers much better in most facilities than they used to. Now, facilities that you speak of are rare whereas they used to be more common.

One of the first steps in protecting yourself is prevention. When you interview with a hospital, ask them if their staff are used to travelers and how well they are received. Listen carefully for any hesitations in responding to your question.

If you do end up taking an assignment that is less than ideal, you can do a few things to mentally protect yourself such as keeping things in perspective. Don't take the treatment personally. The staff doesn't dislike you personally, they are often unhappy with their hospital management and travelers are a good scapegoat. If they weren't complaining about travelers, they would be complaining about something else.

However, if you feel that the treatment you are receiving, is affecting your work and therefore, patient safety then you need to say something. Make sure to plan you are going to say and to whom very carefully. You may also want to talk with your agency first so they know what to expect and can support you if things don't get any better.

Finally, remember you only have 3 months to go and then you can move onto somewhere else. That is one of the beauties of traveling.