

KEYS TO BECOMING A COMPETITIVE TRAVELER

Whether you are a new or experienced traveler, being organized can not only help you land a desired assignment, but it will make your life easier and you will appear more professional. Once you are experienced in your field, you are ready to start your search for the desired assignment. Think carefully about where and why you are traveling before you start your search because once you do.....you will be overwhelmed with phone calls and opportunities.

Experience

You will need at least one year experience in the department you want to work. Therefore, if you work in ICU and you would like some experience in ER, get the experience before you travel. It is not impossible to gain experience in other departments as a traveler, but it is rare. Normally, hospitals want to place you according to your strengths. Also, the more experience you have before you travel, the more flexibility you will have to take different assignments. For example, let's say you find a company that has an assignment in Alaska for an ER nurse and you only have ICU experience. You probably won't be able to take the assignment.

PaperworkPaperwork

Another key to landing your assignment is to have all your paperwork together and ready. This way you not only appear more professional, but you can perhaps beat another traveler to the position. Timing is everything. The first time you gather your paperwork, it can seem overwhelming. Once you have your papers together, applying with companies is relatively easy. The following is a list of papers you can get together before you start searching. You can be one step ahead in the process. Some hospitals will require more specific information, but this will give you a good start.

- Your identification (social security card, drivers license)
- Nursing documents (nursing license, certifications)
- Medical documents (annual PPD, annual physical, immunization record)
- Agency documents (application, resume, skills checklist, two references)

Agency documents will often be sent to you to fill out once they have interested you in an assignment. If you have a resume, life will be easier because you can skip the part on the application that asks about your work history.

Agency Resources

You will need to find the numbers to various travel nursing companies to start your search. Most companies now have a website. If you don't have a computer, I would recommend looking in the back of any nursing journal. Talk with other travelers you currently work with about their experience with various companies. Also, *Hitting the Road: A guide to travel nursing* is a book that recently came out on the market. Names and numbers of at least 80 different agencies are listed in the back of the book.

If you take time to gather experience, current paperwork, and resources, your assignment transitions will go smoother and you will often be able to get the assignment you want.