

## **NURSE TO PATIENT RATIO: A KEY QUESTION**

While travel nursing is not completely dependent on the nursing shortage to thrive, it does benefit from it. Travelers used to be requested on a seasonal basis, but now, travelers are utilized year around to aid in shortages.

It is no secret that a nursing shortage is present and here to stay for some time due to a combination of factors such as: the aging population, retiring nurses, additional career options for women and more.

Yet, until recently, it has been a mystery as to whether the nursing shortage is equally affecting everyone at the same level or whether there are geographical differences? Recent surveys are showing that geography does make a difference. While the nursing shortage is affecting everyone, the West seems to be most affected.

Therefore, one might initially think that hospitals in the West utilize travelers the most to assist with staffing problems, but this is not the case. Perhaps the West would report fewer staffing problems if they staffed more travelers. Currently, only 68% of the hospitals in the West are actually staffing travelers and agency nurses. Meanwhile 72% of the Northeast hospitals staff travelers. Could it be that hospitals in the West are trying get by with less staff in order to save money? After all, the West (especially California) is an expensive place to have any business.

Does this mean that it is difficult to find a travel assignment in the West? No! Travelers can find assignments just about anywhere now. Travelers love to go to California for the weather and the money. Not only does California pay well, but they also pay time and a half after 8 hours work and double time after 12 hrs. Also, California is working on mandatory nurse to patient ratios.

Whether you want to work in the East or the West or somewhere in between, make sure to ask about the nurse to patient ratio when interviewing with the hospital. The ratio is the one key question that will give you an excellent measure of the staffing situation and your expected workload.

Bibliography (author unknown)

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