

ORGANIZING YOUR ORIENTATION

Orientation is the first step of every travel assignment. The word, orientation, implies that you arrive disoriented. Is this actually true? The answer is...yes. You are in a completely new living and working environment, and yet, you are expected to work with grace and confidence as soon as possible. I used to dread orientation, but it is a very important part in determining the success of your assignment. In this article, I will suggest how to organize your orientation to optimize your learning curve.

The key is to think big to small.

Let me explain. Often, the person orienting you doesn't have a clue where to start your orientation. They are trying to take a long orientation and shorten it to a few days or a few minutes. If they ask you what you need to know, request they start with the big picture first. For example, start with a tour of the hospital and/or unit. Ask to be shown around in the order you would start your day. First you might start at the locker room, then to the lounge (for your coffee...of course) and then to the nurses station for report. This will help you map out your day from the very beginning.

Find your major resource people

Next, proceed to find out who your major resource people are and how to contact them when you have questions. Always know the name and number of the unit secretary. The secretary knows everyone and where to find them. If you can, try to meet some of these people so they will have a better idea of who you are when you call. Finally, once you have a good idea of the overall layout of the facility and the people, then you can focus on details such as important policy and procedures, paperwork, and location of supplies.

Being an Operating Room nursing, for example, I often ask to be shown the preoperative area first, then the OR rooms and finally the recovery room. After I know my way around, I ask them to show me how the operating rooms are displayed and where they store their equipment. Next, I have them walk me through a procedure in chronological order (finding the patient's chart, the paperwork, how to coordinate with anesthesia, and where to put specimens at the end of the case etc.). Finally, I get more specific on how to fill out their paperwork, how they like their specimens labeled, co-workers names and specific department phone numbers.

Having an organized approach to your learning each time you orient will help you feel more grounded and to store information more effectively. Take time to think through the order of your typical day at work and make a big to small plan. Most places are thrilled when you help guide them through your orientation. You will be working in the unit with confidence in no time.