



Getting the Most From Your Travel Nursing Career

Congratulations on choosing a career as a traveling nurse! Your education has prepared you well to deliver the specialized care that the United States population needs. Your training will help individuals of a variety of ages and backgrounds and ensure that they receive excellent health care.

Appropriately, most nursing professionals exert tremendous focused effort on developing technical knowledge through education and on the job training. However, few take time at the outset of their careers to properly plan their professional lives. You should ask yourself the following:

What are my primary career goals?

- What type of life do I want my career to support?
- What will travel or local contract assignments help me accomplish?
- Where should I look for the best opportunities?
- How do I choose reliable people and companies to work with?
- How can I build a professional network that works hard for me in helping me achieve my goals?
- What are some of the challenges I expect to face and how will I overcome them?
- Am I truly prepared to take my professional life 'on the road'?
- How can I develop a continual process of discovery and experience, while assessing my progress to make the adjustments necessary to ensure that I achieve my goals?

Answering these and many more key questions can make all the difference between a career built on deliberate choices or one that has resulted from unexpected twists & turns.

Cirrus Medical Staffing is dedicated to your success as a Travel Nursing professional. We recognize your professional talents and experiences, we value you as a person, and we are committed to helping you achieve your dreams. Getting the Most from Your Travel Nursing Career is an evolving publication that is based on the accumulation of many years of experience helping thousands of rehabilitation professionals just like you. In this career guide we share our knowledge of the travel nursing market, our experiences finding just the right assignment for each traveler that we serve, and the tips, tools and resources that can help you design the career of your dreams.

Congratulations on taking this important step. We look forward to contributing to your long term success.

Safe Travels,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Allen".

Greg Allen, President
Cirrus Medical Staffing



Part I: Self Assessment

Designing Your Career Begins with Understanding YOU

Read any self-improvement book available and you will quickly find a great deal of the material is dedicated to understanding what in life is most important to you. It is quite difficult to reach your expected destination without a map and clear milestones as your guides. In Part I of Getting The Most From Your Travel Nursing Career, we will help you quickly assess your goals, wants, needs, special requirements, and the milestones that will help you stay on track.

This can be an extensive process, or an activity that takes just minutes, but it is critical to start with self-discovery (and to revisit often) if your career will take the shape that you originally intended.

Self Discovery

Ten people will give you ten different answers to the question 'What does a rewarding career look like?' For some, a rewarding career is marked primarily by the income one generates or the level of authority accumulated. Others define success in terms of the life their career enables, be it abundant leisure time, unforgettable experiences, financial freedoms, or happy and healthy families and friends. You must develop your own understanding of whom you are, what you want and what you have to offer. For example:

- *What is most important to me in my life? (Money? Status? Relationships? Time? Personal Growth?)*
- *What type of lifestyle do I want?*
- *What type of work gives me energy vs. draining me?*
- *What do I want to spend each day doing?*
- *Who are the types of people I enjoy working with?*
- *What type of work environment is important to me?*
- *What types of work, people, & experiences will I avoid?*
- *What are my talents?*
- *What do I do better than anyone else does?*
- *Where am I lacking?*
- *What steps must I take to improve?*
- *Why have I chosen to work on a travel or local contract basis?*

Defining Your Goals

With a clear understanding of whom you are and what is important to you, goals become quite clear. Of course, your goals will change over time as you discover more about yourself accumulate different experiences and meet new people. However, in order to narrow your focus and set your sights on the initial target, a few early career goals are important.

It is also helpful to categorize your goals. Outline professional goals, personal goals, time frames for each, and think about how often you might revisit them.

Professional Goals

- *What type of healthcare settings do I prefer?*
- *What assignment length is appealing to me?*
- *Am I willing to travel long distances or would I prefer to work locally?*
- *What skills would I like to acquire?*

Personal Goals

- *Why am I working on contract? To maximize income? To pay off debt? How much & by when?*
- *What is most important to me on my first assignment? To see the country? Test the waters before making a permanent move? Stay close to family and friends?*
- *Do I prefer to find a great assignment and stay there for the long term or is it important to me to move around?*
- *Will I travel year-round or only during specific times?*
- *What locations are important to me?*

The only right answers to these questions are your answers. If the reasons for pursuing the career you have chosen are not truly yours, then the life you create will not be yours either. Define your goals. By taking this step, you will be amazed at the clarity with which you can begin your career and chart your success.

People often say that this or that person has not yet found himself. However, the self is not something someone finds, it is the something one creates.

- Thomas Szasz, "Personal Conduct," *The Second Sin*, 1973

I can teach anybody how to get what they want out of life. The problem is I can't find anybody who can tell me what they want.

- Mark Twain



Set Rough Deadlines

A goal without a plan is simply a dream. By taking this first step toward self-discovery and goal definition, you will apply a disciplined action plan to turn those dreams into reality. To complete your plan, it is important to set some rough timeframes. Organize your goals into categories such as:

- Assignment-Specific Goals
- 90 Day Goals
- 6 Month Goals
- 1 Year Goals
- 3 Year Goals
- 5 Year Goals

Rather than leave these vague references to time alone, pick some dates for each of them. There is tremendous power in attaching a deadline to a goal. Deadlines force you out of procrastination and into action. You've heard the saying 'If it weren't for the last minute, nothing would ever get done.' Setting deadlines helps you avoid operating in the last minute.

The One Thing

We all know people in life who seem to have it altogether. Their lives seem perfect. Great job, great family, lots of leisure time. They seem to get so much done. In many cases, the only differences between them and you are clear goals, a plan, and the discipline to act on it.

It is time for you to design the life you want. It is your turn to build a career that leverages your strengths and enables the pursuit of your goals and dreams. To do that you must find the one thing.

The one thing is the type of work or activity that defines you. It is the one thing that may leave you physically exhausted, yet you just cannot get enough. The one thing energizes you, ignites your passions, delivers immense satisfaction, exhilarates your soul, and leaves you feeling magnificent.

Define exactly what that is for yourself, build your plan, and pursue it without compromise.

Let's Get to work

The following pages present a series of self-assessment questions to help you define what is important to you in your travel nursing career.

Whether you are a nurse, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant, carefully considering your goals, primary needs, and dreams is the first step to realizing them all.

Use this tool to get your plans down on paper and revisit it a couple times each year to make sure you're on track, or to think through some changing needs you may have.

About Cirrus Medical Staffing

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Completing Your Self Assessment & Defining Your Goals

Below is a self assessment tool you can use to document what's important to you, your personal and professional goals, and the relative timeframes for each.

Self Assessment Questions

1. What is most important to me in my life? _____

2. What types of lifestyle do I want? _____

3. What type of work gives me energy vs. draining me of it? _____

4. What do I want to spend each day doing? _____

5. Who are the types of people I enjoy working with? _____

6. What type of work environment is important to me? _____



7. What types of work, people, and experiences do I want to avoid? _____

8. What are my talents? _____

9. What do I do better than anyone else? _____

10. In what areas (education, skills, and experience) am I lacking?

11. What steps might I take to improve? _____



Professional Goals

1. What types of healthcare settings do I prefer? _____

2. What assignment length is appealing to me? _____

3. Am I willing to travel nationally or would I prefer to work locally? _____

4. What skills would I like to acquire? _____

Other Important Professional Goals: _____



Personal Goals

1. Why have I chosen contract work? To maximize income to pay off debt? How much & by when?

2. What is most important to me on my first assignment? To see the country? Test the waters before making a permanent move? Stay close to home?

3. Do I prefer to find a great assignment & stay there for the long term or is it important for me to move around?

4. Will I travel year-round or only during specific times? _____

Locations

5. What locations are important to me? List your top 10:

- | | | |
|-----|----|----|
| 1. | 2. | 3. |
| 4. | 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. | 9. |
| 10. | | |



Travel & Housing, Pay & Benefits

1. Can I drive my own car to assignments or do I need transportation?

2. I prefer that my travel arrangements are made by (check one)

My Travel Company Me (Note: Additional tax benefits may be possible with this option.)

3. My housing needs (check all that apply)

I travel with pets How many? What kind? _____

I will provide my own housing while on assignment: _____

4. Please check all that apply:

I am traveling to maximize my income only. I want to have the highest possible hourly rate & I am willing to do without other travel accommodations or benefits to achieve that.

I am traveling to see the country. Income is important to me, but so are some of the other comforts of home. I will need housing, a rental car, and would like to work little to no overtime so that I have the time to enjoy my assignment location.

I DO NOT need medical benefits of any kind.

I need medical benefits for myself only. I need medical benefits for myself and my spouse.

I need medical benefits for myself and my child. I need medical benefits for my family.

Getting Started

Now that you've defined your goals and completed your self assessment, share it with those who will help you along the way. In Part 2, we'll help you select a travel nursing staffing company. Once you do that, your recruiter will become an invaluable resource. Help them understand who you are, your goals, and the timeframes in which you'd like to achieve them. Over time you will find that a great travel company can make a huge difference in the quality of your career.



Part II: How to Select a Travel Nursing Company

If you have taken advantage of Part I of this series of articles, you have completed a thorough self-assessment, defined your goals, set some time frames, and feel great about exactly what you want from your career. Congratulations on taking that important step. You now have a sense of clarity that will make the road a bit more enjoyable and productive.

Now it is time to find the small group of firms that can be your guide in achieving your dreams. In Part II, we give you the tools to make great choices, along with advice for making the most of your recruiter relationship.

As a traveling and local contract rehabilitation therapist, you will not only work in various locations, but you will undoubtedly work with numerous staffing firms throughout your career. It is rare that any single firm will have everything you are looking for at every moment. Therefore, it is critical to identify what is most important to you when working with recruiters and their companies, and to make deliberate choices that are best for you.

We have taken our many years of experience working with nursing professionals just like you, and have organized it into several categories of information we believe will help you in making the best choices.

What to Look For:

Plenty of Jobs

First, make sure the company you are talking to has plenty of jobs in the right areas and settings. Not all companies will have exactly what you are looking for, but if they have a large number of opportunities that change frequently, they can probably find the assignment you are seeking.

Recruiters You 'Click' With

A great recruiter can make the most difference between achieving your career goals and letting them slip away as distant memories. While working on contract can be one of the most fulfilling career choices, it can also be difficult. You may not be treated the same as full-time staff. You may be expected to do more, and you may be excluded from decisions.

This is where your recruiter comes in. A great recruiter can make a good assignment great, and can even help turn a boring one into something much more enjoyable for you. Great recruiters will learn about your goals, motivations, preferences, and decision-making style. Ideally, your recruiter will be able to anticipate which jobs you will be interested in before they even talk with you about them. A great recruiter will know about market conditions, hot markets, and compensation, and will not hesitate to share this information.

It is also important that you enjoy your recruiter. If you do not, work with someone else, even if it is another recruiter in the same company. This person is your lifeline; you need to enjoy talking with them.

It's not that hard to make decisions when you know what your values are. - Roy Disney

Responsive & Friendly Staff

Is your recruiter listening or selling? Are they responsive to your questions and requests? What about after hours numbers in case of emergencies? Will the recruiters and housing coordinators give you their cell numbers in case you need them on the weekend?

It is also important that you are working with a friendly staff. Call the main number and ask for credentialing or housing. How friendly is the receptionist, benefits coordinator, or payroll department? If their employees are happy, you will likely be treated very well.



Perks

In today's market, nearly every Travel Nursing company pays a competitive rate. One way the best companies stand out is in the perks or loyalty programs they offer. Look for:

- *Paid time off (PTO) programs*
- *Student loan reimbursement*
- *Sign-on bonuses*
- *Cell phone reimbursements*
- *Premium housing packages*
- *Tax-free advantage programs*
- *Licensure assistance*
- *Direct deposit*
- *Company paid insurance*
- *401K with match*

Every company has a different offering, and it can be difficult to make apples to apples comparisons, but decide what is most important to you, and find a company that offers these extras.

A Support System

Overall, you should be looking for a company that offers the best combination of as many of these things as you can find. You may be an independent specialist, but you do need a team behind you. In addition, you may love your recruiter, but if the company offers substandard pay, housing, or benefits, it is time to move on. Will the company hunt for a position you want if it does not currently have it available? Does it live up to its promises?

In many cases, you can get this information by talking with other travel or local contract nurses who have experience with the firm. However, if that type of inside information is not available, you will need to be armed with the right questions that will help you make the right assessment before moving forward.

What to Avoid

While the folks you speak with may not sound great, there are always telltale signs that you may not have found the best company. Avoid companies that are too small. In most cases, very small staffing companies have limited opportunities and even fewer resources. Look for companies that employ housing and credentialing specialists. You do NOT want your recruiter to do this. You may also consider avoiding companies that generate most of their business from areas other than nursing. You might feel left out if 95 of 100 workers the company has on staff are allied health professionals. On the other hand, you do not want to be treated like a number.

Above all, seek out honest, ethical companies that value you as a professional and that uphold contractual agreements.

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Part III: Gathering Your Paperwork

If you have worked at least one travel or local contract nursing assignment, you are familiar with the documentation you need in order to work in the profession. What many nursing professionals may not know, however, is that firms like Cirrus Medical Staffing are required to be just as thorough as any hospital that employs nurses, and are held to the same stringent guidelines. As such, it is important to submit your completed paperwork as early in the process as possible. Background checks and drug screens can take several business days, and some facilities require your file up to a week before you can start.

Gathering all of this documentation and keeping it current is not a big deal, particularly if you start the process early and leverage your recruiter for help. In this article, we doffer you some insight and a few resources to help you gather and consistently update your 'schtuff' so that you can be ready to take that sweet new assignment on a moment's notice.

What You Will Need

While there may be some minor differences in what medical facilities (and staffing firms) require when it comes to documentation, in general, most recruiters and the clients they work with are required to have the same types of documents on file. They need an updated skills inventory, your experience, a prior work history, equipment that you have used, and what you have done. They need proof that your licenses are current and to be reassured they will not see you on the next episode of *America's Most Wanted*.

In order to conduct an interview and submit to potential rehab travel or local contract assignment opportunities, most rehab therapy staffing firms only need brief information. Your current resume should be enough. However, some medical facilities also want to see your skills checklist and references to consider you for the position.

Staying Current

Nursing professionals not only need to keep their work history current, but many potential employers want to

see very detailed updates, including the types of settings in which you have worked, case loads you are accustomed to, and equipment you are trained on and have experience using. Of course, your license needs to be up to date and in good standing, but if you are a traveling professional, you may need to maintain licenses in many different states.

Once you have been confirmed to the assignment, new employees need to submit the following:

Medical Information

- Annual drug screen
- Annual physical
- Annual TB test
- Hepatitis B or signed Declination Form
- MMR shot record or titers showing immunity

HR Information

- Orientation Acknowledgement Form
- Orientation Review Form
- Policies and Procedures Checklist
- Employment Agreement
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Handbook Acknowledgement Form
- I9 Form
- W4 Form
- State Tax Form
- State Tax Form (if applicable)
- Copy of Driver's License
- Copy of Social Security Card

Credentialing

- Copies of any state licenses you hold
- National Certification Card
- CPR Card

Job Specific

Sometimes clients have specific requirements, such as:

- 2-Step TB
- Varicella Titer
- Drug Screen within 30 days of start date

should contact you with apartments they believe you will find interesting. However, if you have acquired a license in Nevada but your recruiters do not know it, you may never be notified when an assignment becomes available in Las Vegas.

Set reminders for updating your recruiter after the end of each assignment, or at least 3 times per year. Craft a standard email and save it on your computer. When it comes time to inform the recruiters you work with that your information has changed, attach your new files, and blast it off. You will be ready to entertain that next travel nursing assignment opportunity when it becomes available, and you will have a system for making sure your professional life is documented and well organized.

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Tips for Keeping Your Files Up to Date

If you are a travel nursing professional or local contract nursing professional that frequently moves from assignment to assignment, you will want an easy way to have updated files on hand at all times. Here are some tips to make this a breeze with each new assignment you take:

- 2-Step TB
- Varicella Titer
- Drug Screen within 30 days of start date
- Set up a system - decide when you'll update
- Use a calendar & reminders for license expirations'
- Know which state licenses require CEU's, and look for classes that are approved in each state for which you hold a license.
- Ask your recruiter for help in obtaining new licenses. If you work for Cirrus Medical Staffing, you will be reimbursed!
- Notify your recruiter if you take any prescriptions that could affect your drug screen results.
- Obtain a copy of your drug screen, titers, physical results for your files
- Keep a hard copy of your entire file with you on every assignment
- Store electronic files of your documents on your computer at home or the laptop you travel with, and put a copy on a removable jump drive to take with you to your assignment. You never know what you will need to produce quickly.

Keeping Your Recruiter Up To Speed

Cirrus Medical Staffing strives to start helping you identify your next assignment about 6-8 weeks before the end of your current job. In order to find the best assignments for you, your recruiter stay informed of your experiences and changes over time. Your recruiter



Part IV: How To Get Recruiters To Work Hard For You

As every seasoned traveler knows, having a great recruiter can make all the difference in the world when it comes to advancing your career. A great recruiter knows the business like the back of his or her hand, has a keen sense of where the best opportunities lie, and combines that with a deep understanding of what is important to you to build a new assignment that is even better than the last.

However, there is more to a great recruiter. Once you have worked with a few, the differences between good and great become much clearer. The best recruiters love what they do. They have great people skills. They are patient, yet they know when to apply pressure to help get what you want. They also know when a little finesse is better than making hard demands. More importantly, the best recruiters in the business do something that few others are truly willing to do — they work their tails off for their travelers.

Finding the Best of the Best

For most travelers, finding the recruiter that works best for you is going to take some trial and error, but it does not have to be painful. Travel nursing is a relatively small world, and word — good and bad — gets around fast. Talk with your fellow travelers and staff nurses as well. Odds are that some of them have had great experiences working with recruiters, and they can help you avoid taking an assignment that sounds too good to be true.

The staffing business is all about relationships, and your recruiter should work to build a strong bond with you from the start. You can learn a lot by listening to the questions that recruiters ask you. Are they interested in what is important to you or are they hurrying through the call to try to get to whether or not you would take an assignment? Are they looking beyond your resume to uncover your goals and dreams? Every recruiter wants to place you on an assignment, but the best recruiters know that a strong foundation forms long-term working relationships, and they will not rush this part of the process.

From Recruiter to Personal Career Agent

The very best travel and local contract nursing careers are built based on an open and honest relationship with a hardworking recruiter that is willing to invest the time to find what is best for you. In fact, the very best recruiters become much more than your recruiter — they are you are career agent, your coach, sometimes your counselor, and they almost always become a very close friend. Building this trust takes time, but there are several things a traveler can do to work toward such a relationship.

We Work for YOU, Get the Most From Us

1. Be honest about what is most important.

It is important for your recruiter to know how you prioritize pay, location, and setting. If money is the most important, we will share jobs with you that are not in the location or setting you want, if that is where the best money is. If location is number one on your list, you will see jobs of various pay rates in order to get you to the spot you are seeking.

2. Share a Little, Get a Lot

The best recruiters want to know a lot about you. They know the names of your spouse or significant other, your children, and even your pets. They remember your favorites and surprise you with 'a little something' from time-to-time. Send a photo — it sets you apart from other travelers and reminds us whom we are working for.

3. Full Disclosure

If your recruiter submits you to a client and you are already interviewing there with another travel company, it does not help anyone. We want to know where to spend our time. That is the only reason we ask. We are not trying to steal your job or keep you from talking with other recruiters. The more forthcoming you are about your search, the better we can help you.

4. Stay in Touch

Travel nursing is a small world. Your reputation is important, with clients AND with recruiters. So many travelers go MIA (missing in action) in the middle of an interview process. Even if you find a job elsewhere, give your recruiter the courtesy of a phone call. We will still work with you in 13 weeks when you are looking for a new contract.



5. Do What You Say You'll Do

The best recruiters work harder for travelers they respect. We treat you like the way you would like to be treated. Send your resume when you say you will, return our calls within 24 hours, take the interview with the client when he/she calls, and call us back immediately following that client interview.

6. Be Straightforward

You will not be the first therapist to decline an opportunity, but do provide your recruiter with feedback quickly. Be straightforward — if you do not want an assignment, say NO, not MAYBE.

7. Be Nice

Sometimes the most important things are those that we learned at a very young age. If you yell at the payroll clerk, the credentialing specialist, or housing coordinator, your recruiter hears about it. We are not always perfect, but if you treat people well, they will bend over backwards for you.

8. Fulfill Your Contract

Sometimes bad things happen. If an assignment ends in early termination and your recruiter asks you to fulfill your contract, there are reasons for it.:

- Your reputation
- The recruiter's reputation
- Time to find a new assignment
- Ability to keep you on benefits

Your recruiter has your best interest at heart, even if it means a temporary glitch. Give a little and seek a win-win situation for everyone. Your recruiter and the client will reward your commitment and flexibility.

9. Send a Referral

A referral is the ultimate 'Thank You.' Good people know good people and if you are happy with the recruiter's service, send people our way. Share your recruiter's name and email address. You will instantly become a "rock star" in your recruiter's office and if someone, your wallet gets a little fatter too.

Coollest Thank You

One traveler picked up a small gift for his recruiter at every assignment throughout the year & sent them at Christmas. A t-shirt from a university, a dream-catcher from an Indian reservation, etc. This recruiter won the informal 'bragging rights' competition for who gets the most/best thank you's, and hasn't stopped working for this traveler ever since.

In all, the most important thing to remember in order to get your recruiter to work hard for you is to realize that she/he does not make money if you do not find a job that meets your needs. We know you will go elsewhere from time to time, but the best recruiters work tirelessly so you will not ever have to. The more money you make and the more great assignments we can find for you, the better we do as well. We want to find the perfect job for you and we are on *your* team!

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Part V: Interviewing with the Facility

Working as a traveling nursing professional is a tremendously exciting way to earn a living. Seeing the country, working in a variety of clinical settings - in many ways, it cannot be beat. In order to achieve this lifestyle, it is important that you do the work necessary to set yourself up for the perfect assignment. In this article, we will discuss your interview with the facility, skilled nursing facility, or other acute care center.

The first step in preparing for any traveling assignment is to do your research. It is important that you not only understand the position and all it involves, but also prepare to demonstrate your best qualities and to have your answers planned for those tricky interview questions. While you may have an idea of the job and its details, you need to spend some time with your recruiter to get the full view of the job at hand.

What to Expect:

When interviewing for any job, there are several expectations and recommendations that you must understand before actually going to the interview. It is important to employers to see interviewees that are not only aware of their own skills and benefits that they bring to the table, but that they also have pertinent information about the position and the organization that they are interviewing with. To insure that you meet these interviewing expectations, you must understand the position and its expectations, as well as what the facility is looking for in a candidate.

Understanding the Position:

When talking with your recruiter, there are a number of items you must cover to get a full understanding of the job. First, you need to find out the name and position of the person you will be interviewing with at the facility. You also need to check that you have the correct time and phone number of the interviewer. Your recruiter will help you discover the details of the job, but make sure you communicate it back to them to make sure everyone's on the same page. Confirm all of the primary details and share the remaining questions you have. Your recruiter will fill in the rest of the gaps with the information they have available and work to prepare you for the interview.

S/he should cover specifics about the environment of the job, the number of people on staff, who you would report to daily, the specifics of the caseload, including the number of patients you would be tending to each day, daily expectations, productivity requirements, and what shifts you would be expected to work. It is important to know if weekend rotation is required, whether you will have to work overtime, or even if you would have to work outside of the previously agreed schedule.

You must also understand why the position is open; ask your recruiter. Reasons may be due to seasonality demand, FMLA, or that the facility may not have yet found the right candidate. Recruiters should also relay any soft skills or areas of interest that the manager may have shared when the job order was taken.

What the Facility is Looking for:

Facilities are not only looking for the position requirements to be fulfilled and for a candidate to have the clinical experience necessary, but also someone who is adaptable and able to handle a large and fluctuating work load. The facility is looking for candidates that are able to integrate well with the current team and structure, be a great communicator, and handle issues responsibly. They must be ethical and hardworking. So, when being considered for a traveling therapy position, it is important to understand these qualities and make sure that your personality and background hold up to the requirements.

Common Interview Questions

Once you know the expectations of the job, it is time to get your interview underway. Before you go to the interview, you should make a list of questions and an example answer of what you may share with your interviewer. In order to look prepared and knowledgeable about the job, it is important to continue practicing the answers to the following common interview questions:

1. Tell me about your experience
2. In what types of clinical settings have you worked before?
3. What type of caseload are you accustomed to?
4. What conditions are you most experienced at treating?
5. How long have you been traveling?
6. What equipment are you experienced with?
7. Has most of your work experience been with younger or older patients?

These are just some of the questions that the hiring authority will ask. There will be more. Work with your recruiter to anticipate as many of them as you can and prepare in advance.



Standing Out From the Crowd

Keep in mind that an interview is not just an opportunity for the hiring authority to get to know you. It is also your chance to get the information you need about the job to make your best decision. First, you want to stand out from the crowd. Each answer you give must work to make you the most attractive candidate. To do this, make sure you effectively communicate your flexibility. Employers like to see that you are flexible on time and job responsibilities. You should also come into the interview with a list of well-thought out and effective questions for your interviewer. This shows that you are not only well prepared with a lot of background information, but that you are also engaged and excited about the job. Do not be afraid to show your expertise in the area! Show this through all your answers, your questions, and general conversation throughout the interview.

In addition, it is extremely important that you show professionalism throughout the entire interview process. Ask and answer questions intelligently, treat the interviewer as an expert, and engage them in thoughtful conversation. One of the best tools for standing out is often not the answers you give but the questions you ask.

Negotiations with Your Recruiter

Your compensation and benefits package should be almost settled with your recruiter before your interview. Make sure you have covered your pay, benefits, housing, transportation, and other elements of the job, and have arrangements in place before the facility interview.

Final Considerations for the Job Offer

Before you actually accept the job offer, make sure that you consider all of the aspects within the job. Make sure that you ask about the start and end dates. Ask your recruiter and the hiring authority if the facility has ever terminated assignments early or if they ever extend assignments. This is important to make sure that you are not stuck in case of emergency and the potential for contract extension could work out well for everyone if the assignment goes well. Before you accept the job, you must make sure that you have the answers to these questions. Without them, you may

not be as informed as you need to be in the case of an emergency or if something out of the ordinary occurs.

Preparing for Day 1

Now that you've successfully passed the test and accepted the position, it is time to prepare for your first day on your new travel assignment. Do you have your travel and housing details worked out? All of these items need to be handled before you depart. Do you have the confirmations for everything? Be sure to establish who pays for what, contingency plans if a flight is missed or a rental car is not available, or if you are delayed for any reason.

Make sure that you also know when you can move in to your temporary housing and when you must vacate. Give yourself plenty of time before your first day so that you can get settled before you start. Once you are settled in to your temporary housing, be sure to get a good night's sleep and prepare yourself to get up early and show up early to your first day. Bring your assignment agreements and a photo ID with you to your first day and confirm everything during your orientation.

Throughout your first day, be sure to communicate with your supervisor and recruiter and then again at the end of the first week. Constant communication with these individuals will make your work life a lot easier and more effective, and that any small issues can be resolved quickly.

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Part VI: Negotiating With Your Recruiter

Whether you have just begun your search or are in the process of setting up an interview with a facility, negotiating with your recruiter early in the process is an important step toward finding that perfect assignment. You will need to cover travel and housing arrangements, shifts, hourly rate, overtime pay, & any bonuses that may be available. In some cases it is pretty cut and dry; there is a limit to what we can offer and the hospital client may have no room for any creative negotiations. In many others, however, your recruiter can be the key to turning an assignment that sounds 'so-so' into one that works wonderfully for you.

Therapy Travelers: We're on Your Side

After many years in the staffing business, it is quite likely that we have heard it all in our efforts to help nursing professionals find the best travel jobs. A common misconception that exists is the belief by some that the recruiter is "holding out" on pay or other assignment benefits. Believe it or not, your recruiter is motivated to give you as much as s/he can. The industry is extremely competitive and there are not too many factories pumping out new nurses! The relationships we have with you are tremendously important to us and to be very honest, we want to keep you servicing Cirrus Medical Staffing's client facilities. If there is room in the contract to pay you more, we will find it. If we can offer better housing, we will. Your recruiter wants to help create a

compensation package that is as fair and compelling as possible.

Study the Details

Ever see an assignment on a website offering an unbelievable pay rate and then your recruiter calls with an opportunity that sounds identical but the pay is different? Look closely. In many cases, the first glance at an assignment can leave most travelers seeing a clear difference in compensation. Upon a further review, however, the package can actually be quite similar. Are both companies offering a straight hourly rate or is one of them offering a blended rate?

A typical compensation package includes some or all of the following:

- Hourly wages
- Overtime wages
- Housing or housing allowance
- Daily per diem
- Rental car or car allowance
- Licensure reimbursement
- Completion bonuses
- PTO programs
- Benefits

Many other travel companies add all of these items together to advertise a blended rate. On the surface it looks much higher than what anyone else is paying, but there are many creative ways to make an hourly pay rate look attractive. The fact of the matter is that most clients pay the same rates to staffing companies. In the end the true pay rate offered by most staffing firms is going to be pretty similar.



Want to maximize your take home pay? Consider making your own travel & housing arrangements & taking the allowance. Many property managers will give an individual a better rate than even a staffing company can get with volume discounts. Or travel with a friend and share the apartment.

In addition, taking advantage of per diems can be a great way to pay for your trip. Just be careful the money you are getting does not exceed IRS guidelines. Be aware that there is a lot of heightened attention these days to ensure that payments to travelers, in particular the per diem and/or any allowances paid, follow IRS guidelines. Ask your recruiter about this and check www.IRS.gov for the information you need. If you are getting too much of your income in non-taxable monies, chances are you could be subject to paying taxes at year-end or worse, pay an IRS fine. It pays to do your homework.

It's Only a Good Assignment if it's Right for You

It is important to mention that what is right for some might not be right for all. Keep in mind that your discussions with your recruiter might not only be about maximizing take-home pay - unless you have told us that is all you care about. We work to address each of the needs you have shared with us. Some of the most common needs we have met for our travelers include:

- Special time of
- Traveling with a pet
- Traveling with family

- Multi-stop travel plans
- Unique work schedules

Discuss these and any other needs you may have with your recruiter early in the process and make sure you are on the same page as the communications progress. Chances are good

that you are competing with other travelers for that assignment and clients expect that you have spoken about these items by the time you interview.

Make it Yours with Your Recruiter's Help

Many of our travelers choose the mobile lifestyle to maximize their incomes, while countless others enjoy the freedom to do what they love in several locations each year. Whatever it is that you are seeking, your recruiter can help you make the most of it with a selection of assignments and travel, housing, pay and benefit options that make your career, well - yours.

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Part VII: Travel Day

Travel day! You have found your next destination, culled through tens of potential assignments, agreed to a contract with your recruiter, and now it is time to begin your planning to spend the next 13 weeks or more in your new 'home'. Seasoned travelers have found just about every trick there is, and have made their traveling lifestyles into rewarding careers. For first-time travelers, however, this can be a nerve-racking part of your new adventures. In this article in the "Getting The Most From Your Rehab Travel Career" series, we will help you by sharing some of the best road-tested tips, tricks, and resources we could find.

Quite different from your average vacation, a travel assignment lasting 13 weeks or more introduces many new challenges for the traveler. Of course you have to pack, but can you really pack light for 13 weeks? What should you leave at home? How can you prepare in advance to carry on a normal life for an extended period of time away from wherever you call home? We will address these and many more questions so let us get started.

Planning

To get your assignment started on the right foot, it is important that you have a plan. Start with a list of all the major components of your assignment. Break your overall plan into categories and address them one at a time. For example, on your assignment you will need to:

- **Pack** - develop a system to pack what you need & leave room to bring some new things home
- **Travel** - arrangements to and from your assignment and in between your shifts
- **Sleep** - move in & out dates & procedures, utilities, contact info emergency numbers, etc.
- **Work** - map the location, determine travel time, your shifts, supervisor names, & contact information.
- **Eat & Play** - find the nearest supermarkets and restaurants you would like to try before you leave.
- **Stay Close to Home** - Take care of the things that you cannot ignore for 13 weeks - family, finances, pets, etc.

Let us go through each one, and we will share a few tips our travelers have picked up over the years.

Pack

Of course your destination is going to determine whether you will be getting by in a swimsuit and flip-flops or if you will need more weather-resilient clothing, but it is important to have a strategy for what you will pack. Make a list and follow some simple guidelines.

1. Plan what you would pack for a three-week trip. Pack items you can easily mix & match and you will be surprised how many different outfit's you are prepared with. Three weeks of clothing can easily spread into 13 weeks if you can find ways to get creative.
2. Take versatile shoes & accessories that you can wear with multiple outfits
3. Pack only travel size toiletries and leave the hangers at home. You will purchase what you need for the long haul shortly after you arrive.
4. Regardless of the expected weather, plan for cool nights and pack at least one sweater and jacket.

Travel

Not only will you need your travel arrangements to and from your destination, but also to and from work and any other areas you will want to visit.

1. Have a loose plan. Count on a delay or two - it is part of the traveling lifestyle.
2. Buy a map of the local area or use [Google Maps](#) or [MapQuest](#) and determine two routes to your assignment. Traffic or unexpected construction delays could throw a wrench into your ability to arrive on time.
3. Highlight local supermarkets, banks, pharmacies, barber shops or salons, and the nearest urgent care facility.
4. Consider purchasing a personal GPS device and pre-program the addresses of these important locations and the address where you will stay before you leave.
5. Get off the highway and explore the country roads.



Settling Into Your Home Away From Home

Everything else about your assignment can be perfect, but if the details of your housing arrangements go unchecked, even the most experienced traveler will be missing home in no time. Make sure you have documented your move-in and move-out dates and procedures. Also be sure you have saved your company's housing coordinator information in your cell will be turned on and off, and make sure you have phone numbers for after-hours support. Know when the utilities complete contact information for the property manager during and after-hours. Keep this information on your computer or mobile device and always bring a printed copy or two.

Work

Your first day on your new assignment can be a great experience if you spend the time to plan ahead. Find your facility on the map and get driving directions in advance. Call the local AAA office (even if you are not a member) and try to find out if there are any major construction delays along your route. Save your supervisor's name and contact information into your cell phone and bring a printed copy as well. Finally, document your shifts and pre-program your travel alarm clock with the necessary wake time.

Eat & Play

Working as a traveling nursing professional is a wonderful experience. One of the most rewarding aspects can be taking in all of the culinary delights of your travels. Visit the various city guide websites such as Citysearch.com or simply Google the city you are traveling to and read local reviews of area restaurants, must see landmarks, and other destinations. Plan to get out during your off time and explore local art fairs, parks, sporting, and other recreational events. There is no better way to learn about a city than to enjoy its cuisine and take in local events.

Stay Close to Home

The fact that you are traveling on assignment does not mean your life at home comes to a complete halt. Make sure your family has your contact information of your mobile, work, and your housing facility. If you are

traveling with a friend or co-worker, make sure your family has his or her contact information in case of an emergency. Setup online banking and schedule as many bill payments as you can in advance to avoid forgetting to pay something while on the road. This can also be an excellent time to schedule outside home repairs. Leave your trusted repairperson with a list when you leave, and everything can be taken care of when you return. Just make sure you both agree to inspect the work before the bill is paid. Are you traveling with a pet? Do not forget all of the things they will need as well. Make sure your pet has a good collar and a secure tag, and you might even consider a lost pet recovery service just in case.

Most importantly, try not to change your routine too much. Bring your favorite books with you, and if your kids are used to you reading a bedtime story for them, do it over the phone, or even better, on a webcam.

Just like life at home, your travel assignment can be easier and much more enjoyable with a well thought-out plan. Start this process in advance and talk with another experienced traveler. If you do not know any other travelers, just give us a call at 866-518-1750 and we will connect you with one of our travelers who would be happy to share his or her experiences.

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Finally, contact the leasing agent before you arrive and get instructions for obtaining your keys, particularly if you expect to arrive after normal business hours. Make sure you have their emergency numbers as well. Your housing coordinator should provide you with a list of business and after hours contacts for your apartment complex, and it's a good idea to carry the phone number of your assignment supervisor in case you run into any complications that could impact your first day.

Get to Know Your Surroundings

If your travel company allows you to move in as early as Cirrus Medical Staffing does, take the opportunity to get accustomed to the local area before you start your assignment. There are a number of places that you will want to be able to find quickly when you need them - gas stations, service stations, banks, supermarkets, pharmacies, restaurants, and department stores. You should be able to map most of these before you leave, but it is a good idea to hop in the car or on the bus and find them when you arrive.

Try to develop a familiarity for the area and identify when to expect traffic congestion. Perhaps you can even discover a shortcut or two. Head to the local supermarket and pick up what you will need for your first few days.

Do not forget 'play time' either. Find the local movie theatre, shopping malls, and parks. There are many wonderful scenic drives in just about every city. Seek them out for those times when you are not working. Look for local community newspapers and find out what is happening in the area. Nearly every city has a wide variety of local events and hot spots that can satisfy just about any interest.

Starting Your Assignment Off on the Right Foot

Your assignment location may take a little getting used to, but do not worry - you have 13 weeks to explore. It is very important that your job starts well. Make sure you drive to work before your first day. Map the best route and have a backup route in case of a traffic problem. Your recruiter provided you with an employment confirmation document listing all of your assignment details. This should include your assignment location, department, supervisor names and contact information, your recruiter and housing coordinators names & contact information, as well as all of the HR details - payroll, 401(k), benefits, etc.,.



Part VIII: Arrival & Getting Started

Now that the hard work of finding your next assignment and negotiating your terms are complete, you need to get started on the job and be prepared for anything that comes your way. The key to a successful travel assignment is preparation and in this article, we will help you cover the bases of arrival and your first week. We will talk about getting settled in your housing, acclimating to the local area, and finding your groove in your new travel job.

First Things First - Housing

The most important detail to get ironed out when you arrive at your destination is to get settled in your temporary housing. There's a great degree of comfort in knowing where you'll lay your head. It must be a place in which you can relax. It is important to arrive early so you can move in well before you start work. Cirrus Medical Staffing allows travelers to move in two days early. This provides plenty of time to unpack and settle in. Make sure your housing is as it was described. It should be safe, clean, comfortable, and equipped with the supplies promised. Remember to complete your walk through document and write down or notify your housing coordinator if there is anything that could be charged back to you after you move out.

If your housing leaves something to be desired, contact your housing coordinator or your recruiter BEFORE taking possession of the apartment. Check to make sure that basic utilities are available (water, gas & electric, sewer & trash.) If anything hasn't been handled, call your housing coordinator immediately. They should be on call 24x7 in case of an emergency and they can almost always help resolve the situation quickly.

It's important that you feel safe and comfortable in your new home away from home. Talk with your housing coordinator about any special needs you may have (cable, internet, or perhaps you travel with a pet and need to be on the first floor) well in advance. These arrangements can and should be handled before you arrive.



Review this information in detail before arriving for work.

One of the best things you can do when starting a new assignment is to go in with an open mind. As you know by now, you will work with many different people, in different situations and you will be exposed to a variety of cultures.

Embrace these differences and commit to learning from them. While on a travel rehab therapy assignment you may not be a full time employee of the hospital, however you are most definitely a part of the team. You may be asked to attend team meetings and to provide input into daily operations. Remember, your experience in a variety of different settings is valuable. It is important to respect how things are done at your assignment facility, but do take advantage of opportunities to share what you've learned on the road. Most supervisors and coworkers will truly appreciate what you bring to the table.

Make New Friendships & Build Effective Working Relationships

Your travel career presents wonderful opportunities to meet new people, form tight bonds, and build your network. While your orientation period will be used to answer most of your clinical and procedural questions, get to know your manager and your coworkers. They will help you with on the job questions as well, and these interactions will form the basis of what could be many long-term relationships.

Your supervisors and coworkers can also become your best marketing tools for your next assignment. If you work to build strong relationships on each assignment, you will find that great references are easy to come by. Every staffing firm uses references, and you'll find these relationships to be extremely valuable to you in the long run. Your coworkers may also become people that you can refer to your staffing company if they develop an interest in traveling, and these referrals can add up to sizeable referral bonuses in the future.

Keep Your Recruiter Informed

Your recruiter is your lifeline on a travel assignment. Remember, they work for you but they need your help in order to make traveling everything you expect. Maintain regular contact throughout the assignment, and make sure they know of the successes and

challenges you are facing on the job. Expect a follow up call from your recruiter after your first week - they will want to see how it is going and address any potential issues ahead of time. Over the years, we have found that many problems can be resolved quite easily if they are brought to our attention early.

In addition to informing us if something goes wrong, make sure your recruiter knows when they're getting it right. Beyond just a pat on the back, which we all love, positive feedback lets us know the type of service you expect. This helps us to make sure we are looking for the right places for your next assignment and doing whatever we can to make this an enjoyable experience for you.

Quick Tips for Starting Your Assignment Off Right

1. Maintain an updated file of your credentials for your recruiter.
2. Plan to arrive 24-48 hours before you are required to start work.
3. Create an arrival plan, get settled & handle the necessities before your first day.
4. Map & drive the local area - find your best routes to work, play, and activities of interest.
5. Keep important names & contact information handy - your mobile device is a great resource.
6. Arrive early for your first day and ask many questions.
7. Make sure you bring a picture ID - most of your new supervisors will ask to see this before you begin work.
8. Call your recruiter, share your experiences, and resolve issues early.
9. Use downtime on the job effectively - get to know your coworkers.
10. Start thinking about your next assignment far in advance. Is this an assignment that you could extend?
11. Do not be a stranger - make sure you stay connected to your supervisors and coworkers after the assignment.

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Part IX: The Halfway Point

Not long ago you were gathering your paperwork, feverishly searching job sites and speaking with recruiters to find your assignment. Now that you've made it to the halfway point, it's a great time to take a breath, reassess, and make any adjustments needed in order to finish strong and set yourself up for a new assignment that's even better.

The Highs and Lows

Every travel assignment is going to have its great days and not so great days. Take some time to step back and evaluate how it's going overall. Ask yourself some of the important questions below, and consider keeping a journal of your thoughts. This can help you greatly in making sure each assignment you take builds upon the last.

The Assignment Overall

What are 10 positive aspects of your assignment? List them out and identify which of the 10 are things you'd like to achieve on every assignment.

Do you like the location? Is this a location you'd like to return to? Perhaps you found surrounding areas you might consider on another assignment.

How would you rate the facility? Did the facility, staff, and overall environment provide an atmosphere in which you could grow professionally? Take note of some of the things you noticed (staff levels, caseload, supervisor qualities, etc.) and be sure to look for them in assignments.

Do you enjoy the people you work with? Who are the people you enjoy working with the most? Are there personality types that you find yourself professionally compatible with? What professional relationships are you developing that you might want to work on to help your assignment finish even better than it started?

What would you change next time? While both you and your recruiter work very hard to make sure everything about your job is as close to perfect as possible, there will be things you'd like to change. What would you avoid next time? Take notes and share them with your recruiter.

Professional Growth

Many of our travelers choose this lifestyle for the freedom and financial benefits, but even the most committed travelers grow weary if they're not growing professionally.

- Revisit your expectations at the start of the assignment. Are they being met?
- Are you learning to use new equipment, acquiring new skills, and being exposed to different approaches?
- What new skills would you like to develop even further on future assignments? Make sure you share these goals with your recruiter so they can look for positions that will allow you to do this.
- Have you been challenged in a way you didn't expect? Was this a positive or a negative experience?

Recruiter Relationship

The halfway point of your assignment is a great time to evaluate your relationship with your recruiter and to make sure expectations are being met.

- Is this assignment meeting your expectations? As your recruiter, we work with the information you give to us and search for assignments that we believe meet your needs. Ultimately, however, we need your input to improve our search efforts for you over time. Share with us how it's going and we'll get better at finding the perfect assignment for you.



- Is the level of communication you receive more or less than you need? By now your recruiter should have established some common patterns for communicating with you while you're on assignment. He or she should have also laid the groundwork for an open door whenever there's an issue you need help with. If you'd like to make any adjustments to the communication, now's the time. Share your thoughts with us and we can accommodate you.

Work/Life Balance & Personal Growth

While some out there seem to live to work, don't most of us truly work so that we can live? Our professional lives should be a fulfilling enabler of our personal lives. In many cases, dissatisfaction on the job comes from the fact that the work isn't providing for a fulfilling personal life. Perhaps it takes up too much time, doesn't pay enough, or doesn't allow for the flexibility that's sometimes needed in a young and growing family. It is tremendously important that your personal life not be put on hold for too long.

Evaluate the other side of your life and make sure that your career and each travel assignment is allowing you to live the life you want.

- Are you earning enough?
- Are you healthy? What changes do you need to make?
- Are your personal relationships fulfilling?
- Are you challenged intellectually?
- Do you take time for recreation?

These are some great tools for assessing your life overall on a number of different variables. The Wheel of Life is a well-known assessment tool that demonstrates (based on your rankings of how you feel you're doing) where the priorities seem to be in your life and which aspects might need more attention. Use these tools or just keep a journal of your thoughts.

Finishing Strong

You should be able to make a solid assessment of how your assignment is going in a short amount of time, but the important part is identifying what needs to change and taking action. While you're halfway through the assignment, you're only halfway through. There is time to rethink, adjust, and work on the things that can improve the overall outcome. After completing your evaluation, go through it again and pick one or two things in each category that you want to work on and then identify specific actions you'll take. Involve your recruiter in this process. We serve as your advocate to the client and we can help resolve issues for you. It's our job to help make your assignment everything you need it to be.

As they say: What gets measured gets done, so let's get to work and finish strong!

About Cirrus Medical Staffing

Cirrus Medical Staffing is an award-winning Travel Nurse Company and provider of medical professionals to healthcare facilities across the nation. With offices in Charlotte, Atlanta and Houston, our firm specializes in placing [Nurses](#), [Nurse Practitioners](#), [Physician Assistants](#) and [Allied Health](#) professionals into travel, contract and permanent employment. Cirrus is ranked as one of the top 10 Travel Nurse Companies in the US. For our clients, our focus is providing a one-stop solution to their staffing and HR needs. Cirrus Medical Staffing is Joint Commission Certified.

Cirrus Medical Staffing is a member of the Cirrus Healthcare Group, an international healthcare group specializing in providing US healthcare companies with customized domestic and international staffing and HR solutions. The Group consists of [Cirrus Medical Staffing](#), [Cirrus Allied](#) and [Medivia](#). Cirrus Allied is one of the nation's leading rehabilitation therapy staffing firms and specializes in placing rehabilitation therapists and assistants into travel, contract and permanent employment. In addition, the Cirrus companies provide international Therapist and Nurse staffing augmentation through our recruitment organization, Medivia, located in the Philippines. Medivia is continuously ranked as one of the most outstanding international nurse and therapist recruitment organizations. The companies are all [A. Soriano Corporation](#) (ANSCOR) companies.



Cirrus Medical Staffing has earned the Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval™