Are You a Good Fit for a Travel Nursing Job?

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Article published on June 4th 2012 | Health

Learn if the Lifestyle is Right for You Before You Start!

Travel nursing jobs are fantastic opportunities for anyone who wants to travel across the United States. These professionals enjoy 10-15% more pay, and they rapidly build experience and functional knowledge of the most modern equipment, procedures, and best practices.

However, the travel nursing lifestyle is very different from the experiences of a typical nursing career. For the wrong professional, it can be a wearing experience, with burnout imminent.

Continuously Adapting To New Workspaces

Those who work in travel healthcare will find themselves in a new job every 8, 13, or 26 weeks - usually with minimal preparatory training. The type of person who works in this position will need to feel comfortable with hitting the ground running, and being assertive with the existing staff about what they can and cannot do, so they're not positioned where their training and experience is not sufficient.

The travel nurse must also have a thick skin, and the ability to plug in with the existing team. They will need to be able to learn the line between respecting the existing culture in the healthcare facility, and contributing to that culture with their accumulated wealth of experience and operational knowledge. This means that a good measure of tact, patience, and charisma is the name of the game.

Because of this, a base of 1-2 years of experience is an important prerequisite to becoming a travel nurse - and a minimal requirement for most hiring facilities. Areas of great need may make exceptions, but even in these cases, a travel nurse is best positioned for success when they've had at least some prior experience.

Picking Up And Leaving Every 13 Weeks

If you're the type of person who likes gardening, community involvement, and meeting with old friends, this may not be the ideal position for you. As a travel nurse, you will be transferring to a new assignment in as little as eight weeks - possibly in an entirely different state than your previous one.

If you have young children, pets, or ailing family members in your hometown that need your attention, this may not be the ideal career for you. Many travel nurses struggle in finding pet-friendly living arrangements that meet their requirements for each new assignment, and find themselves making large (sometimes non-refundable) deposits, or paying more for living costs.

If you're not sure if this is ideal for you, there are options that can allow you to try the occupation out without making a long-term commitment. You may ask for a sabbatical at your current facility to practice on a one-time travel assignment, and see if it's the kind of lifestyle that could work for you.

Many nurses will take a one-time travel position to live with sick relative, to enjoy an extended visit with a remote branch of the family, or even to have a long-term stay at a vacation destination.

Other Challenges In Travel Nursing

Travel nursing has a lot of inherent challenges that a newcomer might not expect. In particular, these include the following:

* Delayed Pay: When you work as a travel nurse, the hospital may delay the pay you receive by several weeks. If you don't have a strong financial base that allows for this kind of delay, you might find this to be a strain on your budget.

* Complicated Certification & State Requirements: Each state has their own set of certification requirements, and these can vary from one type of job (RN, Nurse Practitioner, CRNA, etc) to the next. Arranging for these certifications may require a lot of research.

* Arranging For The Next Assignment: Locating hiring facilities, submitting your resumes, and interviewing with new locations can be an ongoing process when assignments are short.

* Finding Suitable Housing: Finding reliable housing on the other side of the housing that is flexible with a 13-week stay can be a significant challenge!

* Benefits: How much vacation, sick time, and personal time is provided when you work in a place for 13 weeks only? Negotiating this, as well as managing one's own health insurance, liability insurance, and other benefits can be quite an ordeal!

To address this, travel nurses will generally work with a travel nursing agency. These agencies effectively hire the professional to work with them, receiving payment from the hospital, taking a service stipend to cover the convenience of their aid. They handle benefits, pay, housing, the task of keeping the travel nurse in a steady stream of new assignments, certification requirements, and much more. This can greatly increase the quality of life for the travel nurse.

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/health-articles/are-you-a-good-fit-for-a-travel-nursing-job.htm - Article Side

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Article Keywords:
travel nursing jobs, travel nurse jobs, travel occupational therapy jobs

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