



Five Reasons to Work Locum Tenens

Where will your nurse practitioner or physician assistant career take you?

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By Lisa Shock, MHS, PA-C

When deciding on a career direction, many NPs and PAs overlook the option of taking temporary assignments with a staffing agency. Given the associated benefits - flexibility, skills training, experiences in new settings, extra income - working as a locum tenens NP or PA is worth considering.

Staffing agencies provide NPs and PAs with the flexibility to work in the state they want, when they want. For example, if a PA has family in a certain part of the country, he or she can travel there on a job assignment and spend quality time with relatives. If an NP likes to ski, he or she can take an assignment in an area with ski slopes and take advantage of some of the best powder in the U.S. Unlike PAs or NPs who are hired into traditional full-time positions, traveling PAs and NPs have the flexibility and leeway to see the country while working and earning income.

I'd like to outline five reasons to work as a travel NP or PA:

1. Explore new specialties. Temporary assignments can offer opportunities to explore new specialties. If an NP or PA has always worked in primary care but wants to try orthopedics or dermatology, he or she could practice in each setting while working as a traveler. Locum tenens assignments allow PAs and family or adult NPs to apply generalist preparation while test-driving a potential new clinical direction.
2. Quickly build job experience. Someone who is just starting out or who has taken time off to raise a family needs to accumulate experience. By working temporary staffing assignments, it doesn't take long to collect much-needed clinical experience while simultaneously sharpening clinical skills.
3. Transition to retirement. For NPs and PAs who are starting to lay the groundwork for retirement, locums tenens assignments can provide income and an attractive work schedule. It is more important than ever that the healthcare field retains as many skilled providers as possible.
4. Earn supplemental income. It's no secret that unexpected financial expenditures arise. Orthodontia, college loans, new car payments - these are unavoidable costs that considerably affect the household budget. By taking a paid vacation from a regular job and working as a locum tenens during vacation, NPs and PAs can earn additional income and pay off big expenses faster. Locum tenens assignments vary from a few

days to a few months, and there is often a selection of choices right in your home state or city.

5. Living expenses may be covered. Staffing companies often cover living expenses as well as malpractice insurance. Without the expense of a mortgage every month, it's much easier to work to knock out those student loans or plan that next vacation abroad. There are countless compelling and exciting reasons to work locum tenens, and working with a staffing company can offer clinical and financial flexibility unmatched in traditional job markets.

Lisa P. Shock is a physician assistant who works with CompHealth (www.comphealth.com) to help educate clients and providers about the use of NPs and PAs. She is the president and CEO of Utilization Solutions in Healthcare, a specialty consultant company that offers services to help implement and improve upon the employment of PAs. Learn more at www.pushpa.biz