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Simplifying Nurse Hiring: Your Step-By-Step Guide

Amid a critical nursing shortage, successfully navigating nurse hiring challenges is more crucial than ever. This guide offers strategic steps to streamline the process, so you can meet your staffing needs with precision and speed.

<u>Understanding the Nurse Hiring Landscape</u>

The nurse hiring landscape is complex. Here's what you need to be aware of to properly staff your team.

Current Challenges in Nurse Recruitment

Navigating the complexities of nurse recruitment requires paying attention to four critical challenges:

Nursing Shortage: The nursing profession is experiencing a growing shortage, with a projected gap of 78,610 full-time equivalent (FTE) registered nurses (RNs) by 2025 and 63,720 FTE RNs by 2030.[1] This shortfall is particularly concerning considering the anticipated 6% increase in nursing jobs by 2033, which would bring the total number of positions to approximately 3,497,300.[2]

Educational Challenges: Due to faculty shortages, lack of classroom space, and insufficient clinical sites, nursing schools turned away almost 92,000 qualified baccalaureate or graduate nursing program applicants in 2021.[3]

Aging Population: All baby boomers will be 65 or older by 2030, representing 20% of the U.S. population, and 80% of them are grappling with at least one chronic condition. This increases the pressure on healthcare services and the need for specialized nursing skills.[4]

Rural Community Challenges: Lower salaries and limited job opportunities for spouses in rural areas compound the difficulty in attracting healthcare professionals, making these regions particularly vulnerable to severe staffing shortages.

The Role of Nurse Staffing Agencies

As healthcare faces acute nurse staffing challenges, nurse staffing agencies have become increasingly vital. They provide essential support by:

Quickly Filling Vacancies: Agencies expedite the recruitment process utilizing qualified, local talent helping healthcare facilities manage sudden increases in patient volume and fill vacant positions swiftly.

Offering Flexibility: Staffing agencies offer varied employment types — **temporary, permanent, and temp-to-perm** — giving facilities and nurses the flexibility to choose what best fits their needs.

Responding to Emergencies: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the reliance on temporary nursing staff spiked, underscoring the role of agencies in bolstering healthcare responses to crisis situations.

Continue on for steps to help!

Step 1: Defining Your Hiring Needs

Crafting a precise hiring strategy begins with a clear definition of your needs so you can target the right nurse profiles and specialties.

Assessing Staffing Requirements

To **effectively determine staffing needs**, healthcare facilities should:
- Analyze historical patient admission and census data to predict future needs
- Consider the required skill mix for different units to address specific patient care demands
- Account for staff turnover rates and anticipated retirements that impact workforce stability
- Evaluate how new technologies or services could alter current and future staffing requirements

Determining the Type of Hire

Understanding the variety of nurse staffing solutions helps tailor recruitment to your facility's demands:
- **Per diem or PRN (as needed):** Offers flexibility to manage unpredictable staffing needs
- **Travel nursing:** Provides skilled nurses for short-term contracts in high-need areas
- **Temp-to-perm or permanent placement contracts:** Facilitates the evaluation of potential long-term staff members in actual work settings
- **Short-term contracts:** Ideal for covering seasonal spikes or maternity leaves
- **Long-term contracts:** Ensures stability in units with ongoing high demand staffing requirements

Step 2: Choosing the Right Nurse Staffing Agency

Here are some tips to help you choose a staffing partner that meets your needs.

Factors To Consider

When selecting a nurse staffing agency, consider these essential factors:
- **Price:** Compare pricing structures, including hourly rates, flat fees, and percentage-based fees, to find the best financial fit.
- **Speed:** Assess the agency's average time-to-hire.
- **Quality:** Ensure the agency conducts thorough screening processes, verifying licenses, certifications, and references.

Evaluating Agency Credentials

To evaluate a nurse staffing agency's credentials, check the following:
- **Licensing and certifications:** Confirm that the agency has a license to operate within your state.
- **Professional associations:** Certification with agencies, such as **The Joint Commission (TJC)**, ensures quality health care for all patients and demonstrates continuous compliance with TJC's rigorous standards.
- **Client testimonials and reviews:** Explore feedback from other healthcare facilities that have utilized the agency's services.
- **Healthcare partnerships:** Inquire about the agency's partnerships with healthcare facilities to gauge the quality and reach of their services.

Step 3: The Nurse Hiring Process

Here are some tips to help you integrate technology and expert insights to create a smooth process.

Submitting Staffing Requests

Make submitting staffing requests effortless with tools such as:
- **Online portals:** Utilize online platforms that support submission and real-time tracking of staffing requests.
- **AI-powered matching:** Some systems, such as **Medix's MyPrint solution**, match facility needs with the best candidates.

Reviewing Candidate Profiles

Here are some key areas to pay attention to when reviewing candidate profiles:
- **Clinical oversight:** Some agencies have chief nursing officers and other board-certified professionals on staff to lead the process and assess candidates.
- **Comprehensive profiles:** Detailed profiles should include work history, specialties, certifications, and relevant experience.
- **Cultural fit:** Evaluate soft skills and cultural fit indicators, which are crucial for integrating new nurses into existing teams.
- **Similar settings:** Consider candidates' experience in healthcare settings similar to yours, ensuring they're capable of meeting specific patient care standards.

Step 4: Onboarding and Integration

Proper onboarding and integration are essential to set new hires up for success. Here's how to make a smooth transition.

Preparing for New Hires

Start strong by ensuring a well-organized onboarding process:

- **Create a comprehensive onboarding checklist:** Detail all tasks and procedures requiring completion before and during the new hire's first days.
- **Prepare a welcome package with essential information:** Include important documents, contact information, and an overview of the facility's culture and policies.
- **Assign a mentor or buddy to each new hire:** This person will provide guidance, answer questions, and help the new hire acclimate to their role.
- **Set up all required technology access and training:** Confirm that new hires have access to necessary systems and receive training to start their tasks.

Integrating Agency Nurses Into Your Team

Foster a sense of belonging and teamwork from day one by:

- **Host a team meeting to introduce the new agency nurse:** Facilitate a meeting where the new hire can meet colleagues, understand team dynamics, and learn about current projects.
- **Provide a thorough orientation to the unit:** Offer an in-depth introduction to the unit's layout, procedures, and key personnel to help the new hire navigate their environment.
- **Clearly communicate expectations and performance standards:** Discuss job roles, responsibilities, and performance metrics.
- **Encourage regular feedback sessions:** Schedule frequent check-ins to address any issues, provide support, and make necessary adjustments to improve integration.
- **Include agency nurses in team-building activities and social events:** Actively involve new hires in social and professional gatherings to integrate them into the team culture.

Step 5: Maintaining Relationships

Maintaining strong relationships with both the staffing agency and agency nurses is key for long-term success.

Relationship With the Staffing Agency

Here's how to build a collaborative relationship with your staffing agency:

- **Regularly communicate feedback on placed nurses:** Share insights on performance and fit to help the agency refine future placements.
- **Be clear and timely with staffing needs and changes:** Provide updates on your staffing requirements to facilitate quick and appropriate responses.
- **Consider establishing a preferred vendor relationship:** Strengthen your partnership through exclusive agreements that benefit both parties.
- **Invite agency representatives for periodic site visits:** Allow them to understand your environment better and tailor their services to your needs more effectively.

Relationship With Agency Nurses

Here's how to foster a positive relationship with agency nurses:

- **Treat agency nurses as valuable team members:** Integrate them as you would a new permanent nurse, regardless of their temporary status.
- **Provide constructive feedback and recognition:** Acknowledge their efforts and provide feedback that helps them grow professionally.
- **Clearly communicate expectations and performance standards:** Discuss job roles, responsibilities, and performance metrics.
- **Offer opportunities for skill development and learning:** Enable them to attend training sessions and participate in skill-enhancing activities alongside permanent staff.
- **Consider offering permanent positions to exceptional agency nurses:** Identify and retain top talent within your facility to strengthen your workforce.

By implementing these strategic steps and fostering strong relationships with both staffing agencies and agency nurses, healthcare facilities can effectively navigate the complex nurse hiring landscape. Partner with Medix to experience even more benefits of a streamlined nurse hiring process. Our expert team, innovative technology, and commitment to patient care ensure you find the perfect candidates to meet your unique staffing needs. **Contact us today** to discuss how we can help you navigate the nursing shortage and achieve your hiring goals.

1. National Center for Health Workforce Analysis. (2022). Nurse workforce projections, 2020-2035. https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/Nursing-Workforce-Projections-Factsheet.pdf

2. "Registered Nurses." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 17, 2024. https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm.

3. Moira K. McGhee, "Nursing Shortages in 2024: A State-by-State Breakdown." Vivian. February 9, 2024. Accessed May 29, 2024. https://www.vivian.com/community/industry-trends/nursing-shortage-by-state/

4. Issue brief. Accessed August 28, 2024. https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2020/08/value-initiative-issue-brief-10-creating-value-with-age-friendly-health-systems.pdf.

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