



Job Search Strategies for Nurses

This material was developed to provide nurse members of the Massachusetts Nurses Association with suggested strategies for securing new permanent or per diem employment.

Pre-Job Search:

- Check the greeting on the phone lines listed on your resume and applications. Ensure your voice mail has a professional sounding message, with both your first and last name, and no background music or sounds.
- Clean up your social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) remove photos or comments you would not want a prospective employer to view. Studies show that 98% of HR/managers research you on-line.
- Research your name on search engines (such as Google) and follow the links. Ask friends to take down any photo tags of you that may reflect negatively. Review the background of each photo for items you would not want your prospective employee to see.
- Update your resume (see following sample). Be sure to have it proof-read by someone else (non-nurse preferred). Remember, employers only look at a resume for one minute, be specific, to the point and highlight all of your accomplishments.
- Develop a list of at least three professional references, with current and accurate contact information. Keep in touch with them throughout the job search process. Former colleagues and former managers are good references.
- Research the geographic area you are willing to commute to and create a list of all the facilities within that area.
- Network with your nurse friends and acquaintances. Make a list and reach out to all your nurse friends.
- Consider creating a professional social media account on venues such as LinkedIn or Handshake.

How to start your job search:

- Set up candidate accounts at job search sites (listed below). Many will send alert messages as positions are posted.
- Review the position postings at your preferred place for employment (below is the direct link for some MNA facilities).
- Most facilities now only accept online resumes and applications - these are forwarded directly to Human Resources/ Recruiters. They are scanned in by HR and key words become important for how your application is filed. Keep your "career objective" open ended, and list "Registered Nurse." Begin submitting on-line applications.
- HR is supposed to forward your resume to the appropriate nurse manager electronically, but often only forward applicants if there is a position posted on that unit.
- To better control where your resume is forwarded within the facility, you could call the unit and/or specialty area you want to work in, and ask for the name of the nurse manager. Then draft a cover letter and include a resume directly to the

nurse manager. Most large faculties have hundreds of applications submitted daily, and managers likely receive hundreds of emails per day so it is easy for your application to get lost in the system.

- Print your resume on good quality paper stock (50–65 lb.) in off white or light gray and send with matching envelopes to offset the letter from traditional mail and photocopies.
- Keep a log sheet of all submitted applications, letters and resumes sent out with the contact names and identify follow-up dates in your calendar.
- Follow up with a phone call to HR (and/or the nurse manager if you directed a letter to that contact), in a week or two after you submit your application. A simple phone call can be your key to getting an interview:

Example: Hello my name is ____ I forwarded you a (application/resume) last week in response to ____ position. I just wanted to know when you might be scheduling interviews. I am very interested in your facility and would like to be a candidate for the position. Is there any more information you need from me? I look forward to hearing from you.

Preparing for your interviews:

- Secure an interview outfit. Ensure it fits comfortably in the sitting position with skirt hem line at the knee. Pants are also acceptable.
- Prepare a professional portfolio to hold multiple copies of your resume, written references, and last performance evaluation (it is helpful to include copies of all performance evaluations from your current or most recent employer, especially if they are not aware you are looking for a new position).
- Prepare copies of your reference contact list (give to the interviewer at the end of the interview, only if interested in the position).
- Include copies of any clinical projects or quality improvement efforts you were involved with in your portfolio.
- Include lists of educational programs attended and/or any special clinical or community projects you were involved in.

Interview Strategies:

- Accept all interviews, even if you are only remotely interested in the position. You may learn things about the position in your interview that will pique your interest. It is also a good opportunity to practice your interview skills.
- Pre-interview, network with any employees you may know at the facility and research the facility on the internet.

- Arrive early and prepared. Dress for success. Suits preferred, limit the jewelry, and shoes should be polished and professional. Limit skin exposure, and cover tattoos. Research shows first impressions are created within seconds of meeting someone. The interview begins when the conversation begins and includes all casual conversation (i.e. walk from the lobby, elevator ride, etc.).
- Pay attention to names and titles as introduced (so you can address the thank you notes appropriately, post interview).
- Maintain a positive demeanor and body language. Stay positive even on negative past clinical experiences.
- Take notes as the position/unit is being described. Ask questions and clarify any unclear expectations.
- Be prepared to describe yourself and your clinical experiences; be prepared for the standard interview questions (see below).
- Inquire about the orientation schedule. Note the balance between classroom and on-unit orientation. Ask about educational opportunities and reimbursement. Inquire about how preceptors are selected
- Consider health and safety Issues (i.e., hazardous materials, lifting equipment, and work-place violence /security issues).
- If they are indicating interest in you as a candidate, consider asking for the opportunity to meet or shadow with a co-worker. This will give you real insight to the unit mix, schedules, floating, and mandatory OT.
- Be prepared to take standard tests (medication, clinical competency lists and typing tests).
- End the interview with a review of the strengths you bring to the position. Consider asking if there is anything that wasn't shared during the interview that would help in their decision-making process ("Is there anything we haven't covered that I can share with you to support my candidacy for this position?").
- Determine the next step in the interview process; ask when you may call to follow up. And then be sure to follow up at that pre-determined time ("When might you be making a decision on this position?").

- After the interview, contact your references and prepare them for a potential contact.
- Send a thank you to all the individuals you met with (including any support staff that assisted you with questions). Email thank you notes are acceptable, however hand-written thank you notes may make a better impression.
- Follow up with a phone call in 1-2 weeks (or as otherwise determined by interview).

Sample Interview Questions:

- Identify your strengths and weaknesses (select weaknesses carefully and turn them into opportunities).
- Where do you see yourself in one year and five years?
- What do you value most in nursing and/or what is your philosophy of nursing?
- What accomplishments were most satisfying for you? What dissatisfies you most about nursing? (stay positive with the dissatisfiers).
- How would you, your peers and your supervisor describe you?
- How do you handle stress?
- What areas of nursing practice will present you with the most clinical challenge?
- Describe how you handled a challenging clinical situation (difficult family member/ethical issue/negative physician interactions are the typical examples).

Strategies for Job Search Conclusion:

- Ensure you have a written confirmation from your new employer with specified salary and benefits.
- Contact your references and send a thank you note and update.
- Send a thank you to your new nurse manager and the nurse recruiter (email or handwritten).
- Contact any other facilities that you interviewed with recently to inform them you accepted a position elsewhere and thank them for their interest. Always depart on a positive note.

Sample Post Interview Thank You Note

Date

XYZ Hospital

Jane Doe RN

Mailing Address

Dear Jane Doe,

It was a pleasure meeting you on (date) to discuss the XYZ position. I appreciate the time you (and your team members, if applicable) spent with me and the opportunity to learn more about the position. Our conversation has allowed me to gain a broader perspective of the responsibilities and expectations of the role. I would like you to know that my eagerness to work with your team has grown considerably as a result of our discussion.

Please allow me to summarize why I can make a significant contribution to your facility:

- *Add 3 bullet points of how your expertise fits the needs of the position.*
- *Bullet points should coincide with either the published job responsibilities of the position or information you learned during the interview.*
- *For example: Extensive experience in (specialty) nursing (be as specific as possible).*

The opportunities I have had during my career coupled with my educational background, would allow me to competently perform the responsibilities of the position. I hope to have the opportunity to further explore the possibilities with you in the near future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Smith, RN

Each interviewer should be sent an individualized thank you letter or email.

Sample resume and cover letter

(Registered Nurse – Resume Sample)

Name, Credentials

Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Telephone Numbers
E-mail Address

Career Objective: (optional): to continue my career development through a (periderm position) employment as a XYZ Staff nurse in a XYZ facility.

Professional Experience: (List work experience, most recent first)

Dates Name of Employer, City, State, Role / Title, Unit/Division (brief description of your role, using active words)

June 20??-Present Name of Facility, Town, Massachusetts Describe position – Staff Nurse on a, XYZ bed, Unit with XYZ types of patient. Served as a Preceptor, Charge Nurse and/r Resource Nurse.

Dates List positions as far as represents your experience base. Generally no more than 10 years unless you significantly changed your practice area

Education 20??-20?? XYZ University, Town, MA Major and list Honors or Summa Cum Laude status if applicable

Certifications 20?? - present Advanced Cardiac Life Support Dates Certification in your specialty if applicable

Professional Association Dates Massachusetts Nurses Association Dates Specialty Organizations if applicable Dates Sigma Theta Tau International if applicable

Community Activities:

(Sample Registered Nurse Cover Letter)

Date

XYZ Hospital
Human Resource – Nurse Recruiter
Jane Doe RN
Mailing Address

Dear Jane Doe,

I am a (list specialty) nurse of X years of experience and looking to for (periderm position or a new career opportunity) within XYZ facility. (Or: I am responding to the job posting on the website or job posting ID#, for XYZ). Professionally, I have worked in XYZ area for X years. (Describe how you are particularly skilled in some of the requirements listed in the job posting.)

I welcome the opportunity to explore how my experience might be an asset to your facility. With your institution's reputation for quality patient care, I feel my skill sets would complement the values of your team.

Please contact me at (telephone number & email) to arrange an interview. I eagerly await the opportunity to discuss a (periderm or permanent) position at your facility.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mary Smith, RN

Online resources:

With the current need for COVID vaccinators across the state, there are ample job opportunities for flexible and temporary work. Several sites are located right in the Worcester area. For information on open positions and how to apply, visit the link below:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/apply-for-jobs-at-covid-19-temporary-care-sites>

Web sites for nursing employment search engines:

<https://www.indeed.com>

<http://www.getnursingjobs.com>

<https://www.careerbuilder.com>

<https://www.nurse.com/jobs>

Links to online application sites for MNA represented facilities:

University of Massachusetts Memorial & Hahnemann Campuses:

<https://jobs.jobvite.com/umassmemorialhealthcare>

Newton Wellesley Hospital:

<https://www.nwh.org/careers/careers>

Brigham & Women's Hospital:

<https://www.brighamandwomens.org/about-bwh/careers>

Tufts Medical Center:

<https://jobs.tuftsmedicalcenter.org>

Boston Medical Center:

<https://jobs.bmc.org>

Leominster Hospital:

<https://jobs.jobvite.com/umassmemorialhealthcare>

Marlboro Hospital:

<https://jobs.jobvite.com/umassmemorialhealthcare>

There are a number of temporary nursing staffing agencies and travel nursing agencies in the New England area. A simple search engine will identify a handful of agencies. Beware, some of these agencies also provide "Strike Nurses" to the facilities. The following two agencies reported they do not provide staffing to strike facilities:

Fastaff: <https://www.fastaff.com/>

Nurse Fly: <https://www.nursefly.com/locations>

Best wishes on your temporary staffing position search. The MNA Nursing Division is here as a resource for resume development and job search questions. Please reach out to us at 800-882-2056 to discuss your questions or submit your resume for review to jpare@mnarn.org.

