

---

# SELECTING A TRAVEL COMPANY

---



An educational guide for Healthcare Professionals

HEALTH FORCE



### Introduction

There's no question that the dynamics of the travel staffing industry have changed dramatically over the last several years. What started as a manageable group of choices - large staffing providers, medium sized, growing players, and a handful of "mom and pop" shops - has exploded into innumerable options for the healthcare traveler.

With so many companies clamoring to gobble up a limited supply of traveling healthcare professionals and staffing contracts, the market is in the traveler's favor. However, wading through endless competing travel companies, identifying your best set of options and making a clear "apples to apples" comparison has never been more difficult for the healthcare traveler.

In this educational guide from Health Force, healthcare travelers will find easy-to-use tips and resources for arriving at a short list of potential travel companies and making choice that best meets their professional and personal goals.

### **Narrowing Down Your Options**

The first step in making the best decision about what travel company to use is setting your professional and personal priorities. This can be done quickly and easily by completing a thorough self-assessment. For example,

- Why have you chosen to travel?
- What are you looking for in terms of:
  - Professional opportunities
  - Location
  - Travel
  - Housing
  - Pay
  - Benefits
  - Rewards & other incentives
  - Tax implications
- Is traveling a permanent or temporary career choice?
- What geographical areas are of most interest to you?
- In what types of facilities do you perform at your best?

Download and complete the Self - Assessment Tool at [www.Health-Force.com](http://www.Health-Force.com).

In just a few minutes, a self-assessment will help you to clearly articulate your goals and priorities, and determine a short and long-term action plan to get there.



### Is an “apples-to-apples” comparison possible?

This is most likely a familiar scenario: You call 3 different companies about a position in the same facility, asking about pay, housing and travel assignments that are offered. Does what you hear back sound like this?

Recruiter 1: “We pay \$40/hr on the Tax Advantage program, you take care of your travel, housing & car.”

Recruiter 2: “We pay \$35/hr, give you travel subsidy, private housing and no rental car.”

Recruiter 3: “We pay \$30/hr, give you a round trip flight, private housing & rental car.”

Without fully understanding your own priorities, how to truly compare different offers, and the tax implications of each, you might not get the best opportunity available to you. For example, if you don't mind handling your own travel and housing arrangements, the 440/hr assignment with the Tax Advantage program is clearly the winner. In return for being your own travel agent, you'll pocket much more on this assignment. However, if you'd rather have your recruiter handle all of the arrangements, and you don't want to be bothered with keeping the receipts, etc., then the \$30/hr assignment might be best for you.

**Here's a simple explanation:** Travel companies contract with hospitals to provide healthcare professionals at an agreed-upon bill rate. After the company keeps a % as its margin to pay for its costs (recruiter salaries, etc.) and profits, there is an hourly amount left over for the traveler. Let's say a hospital agrees to pay a travel company \$55/hr for each nurse. The breakdown might look like this:

**Bill Rate:** \$55/hr

**Staffing company margin:** 20% (\$11/hr)

**Remaining Hourly Amount for Traveler:** \$44/hr

**Offered Hourly Rate:** \$33

**Remaining Hourly Rate to Pay for Benefits:** \$11/hr

Over a 13 week assignment, that means \$6,864 ( $\$11/\text{hr} \times 48\text{hrs} \times 13\text{ weeks}$ ) can be spent on all of the other benefits such as your flight, housing, rental car, completion bonuses, medical benefits, etc. Sounds like a lot, but consider that at a minimum of \$250 a week, a decent apartment will quickly eat up \$3,250 of that. Add in \$1,000 or more for a flight if it has to be booked on late notice, and the remaining budget gets used up quickly. If you're a seasoned traveler, you may be better off financially to hunt down your own travel arrangements at the best prices you can find and pocket some extra cash in the process.



### **Working Your Short List**

Now that you've completed a self-assessment, your goals and priorities are much clearer. You know exactly what you want to get out of your travel experience. Once you've filled out the Staffing Company Selection Worksheet, you can easily rule out those companies who just can't offer what you're looking for and get to a short list of 3-5 companies. Since they're on your short list, all of these companies should offer what you need. Now it's time to ask all the right questions so you can make the best choice.

Keep in mind that recruiters work with thousands of travelers with varying levels of experience in the profession. They should always make an effort to answer your questions thoroughly, and the critical details of your assignment will be included in your contract. But if you're new to travel, you might not know what you don't know. Some of the most critical topics you'll want to cover with your recruiter are listed below:

- Pay schedules & distribution methods
- Availability of funds
- Problem resolution
- Provisions & consequences for early termination of a contract (by you or the facility)
- Nurse to patient ratios
- Assigned details before/after completed application
- Background/licensure checking, drug screen policies
- Availability of overtime
- Float requirements
- Guaranteed hours
- Flexibility/customization of assignment options (pay, travel, housing, car, etc.)
- Availability of Tax Advantage Program

### **The Bottom Line?**

Do your homework. To get the most out of your travel experience, it's critical that you spend the time completing a self assessment and setting your priorities. Decide what you can and cannot live without. Determine what is worth negotiating, and go for your best opportunity.

But remember, the most successful and satisfied healthcare travelers have learned the hard way that creating a win-win situation for you, the staffing company, and the hospital is absolutely critical. the pay rate, travel arrangements, and other benefits that you received on one assignment might not be available on all of them. It's all a function of what the hospitals are willing to pay to get you there. Accept the give and take, and enjoy the freedom, exhilaration, and challenges of being a traveling healthcare professional.