

Conducting a long-distance job search

Are you thinking of moving out of the Baltimore area upon graduation? Are you ready for the sunny skies of California, the fast-pace of New York City, the quiet of a rural town, or do you long to move back to the area in which you grew up? Wherever you choose to live, a successful, long-distance job search takes preparation, planning, and persistence. This guide will help you conduct a job search that will enable you to get a position in the location you want.

The challenges of a long-distance job search

Many job seekers complain that a long-distance job search is difficult and costly. It can be, but with proper planning, you can avoid some of these challenges:

- There may be many qualified locals competing for the same positions .
- Some employers may prefer hiring local graduates since they are more familiar with the degree programs of nearby colleges and universities.
- Moving to a location where you don't know anyone can be expensive—you will probably have to pay for hotel and other expenses while interviewing as well as future moving costs.
- Local applicants may have the advantage of having already worked in the organization in which you would like to be employed.
- A long-distance search usually takes longer than a local search.

Of course, the challenges listed above can be overcome so that you can have the opportunity to live where you want.

Getting Ready

To save time and money, before you step on a plane or gas up your car, do as much work ahead of time as possible. Your preparation will pay off. For any job search, you should begin by doing the following:

- Identify your career and personal goals.
 - What type of nursing position do you want?
 - Are you interested in a specialty area? Which one? Why?
 - Where do you want to live?
 - What is your time frame?
 - How does seeking a position in this location help you achieve your personal and professional goals?
- Write an ideal job description and use it as a benchmark.
 - Describe—in detail—the type of nursing position you are seeking?
 - What is negotiable?
 - What is absolutely necessary before you are willing to accept a position?

- Describe the schedule, environment, supervisor and colleague relationships, and training that you are seeking.
 - What benefits are necessary?
 - What else is important to you?
- Identify potential employers in your geographic area of interest. Visit www.minoritynurse.com or <http://adams.mgh.harvard.edu/hospitalwebusa.html> for extensive lists of hospitals and health care facilities organized by state.
 - Identify all potential employers. Consider organizations of different sizes (teaching hospitals to stand-alone emergency centers).
 - Review local and regional newspapers to get an idea of the nursing market and to also learn about the area in general.
 - Visit city, state and regional web sites. Find out about social, athletic, religious, and volunteer organizations that are of interest to you as well.
 - Are you seeking employment in a specialty area? If so, identify what health centers offer care in these specialties. Identify relevant professional nursing organizations as well. Find out if there are local chapters and join them. Often you can join as a student member. It can cost significantly less.
- Be organized—create a binder to manage the information you’ll collect. If you are considering several locations, you may want a separate binder for each city. Sections could include: resume/cover letters, employers, housing information, city information, professional organizations, list of applications submitted, contacts, etc.
- Create a timeline. With the nursing shortage, you may find a job very quickly, particularly if your resume is strong and you interview well. How much time will you need to pack, find a place to live and move? Your employer will probably like you to start immediately, but be realistic. You’ll want to start your new position rested and ready to go.
- Most employers want applicants to start immediately, but because of the nursing shortage, many will interview you in advance—when you are visiting or on break—and allow you to start after graduation, or maybe even later. Identify employers of interest and contact them, letting them know when you will be in the area.
- Be sure to include your relocation plans in your cover letter. If you know someone in the area and can list their address and telephone on your resume, include it in addition to your JHU address.
- If you can include a local telephone number on your resume or cover letter, be sure that the message on the answering machine is professional. If possible, include your name in the message. If you can’t, see if you can have the message say: “You have reached 410-555-1212. Please leave your name, number, time and reason for calling.” Preferably, the message will include no other names so as not to confuse the caller.

- Include when you will be moving to the area on your resume (i.e., after June 1, 2003).
- Check out local professional associations. Visit the SON career resources web site for links to state and specialty nursing associations.
- Check out the JHU Alumni Association website to identify JHU graduates living in your area of interest. Do not limit yourself to nursing alumni.
- When you are visiting, it may be helpful to use the career center at a local college or university. Although you will probably not be allowed to use their recruiting resources or meet with a career counselor, you may have access to the library and other resources. You can request this by contacting the career center directly. Often, they will ask for a letter of reciprocity. (This can be written by the SON career consultant—a letter of reciprocity allows students from that school to use our resources if requested.)
 - Check out the local public library as well.
 - Complete on-line applications—include when you will be visiting the area. Arrange for appointments while you are there.
 - Find out if an organization of interest to you will be holding a job fair.
 - Look for on-line job fairs. It's a great way to apply for positions without travel expenses. Visit HRLive.com for a comprehensive list of job fairs.
 - Read ***US News and World Report*** to learn about hospital rankings in the area you've identified.
 - Conduct a salary calculation to determine cost of living in your city of choice.
 - Conduct a housing survey to learn what is available and the relative costs.
 - After you receive an offer, ask if there is help with housing costs. Sometimes, organizations will help with closing costs if an employee purchases a home nearby. Check to see if there is an office that can help you with your move.

Conducting a long-distance job search can be a challenge, particularly if you do not have a connection in the area. However, with preparation and planning, you can successfully transition to a new location and begin a rewarding nursing career.

For assistance with your job search, contact the Career Resource Center at 410-955-7548.