



Considering Contracting with a Staffing Company? 5 Questions You Need to Ask...

Recruiting provider talent remains a huge challenge for healthcare systems, both large and small. The recruitment process can be laborious: reviewing CVs, coordinating interviews and site visits for candidates, and negotiating contracts and salaries are time consuming, often leaving departments short-staffed and disrupting revenue streams. That's why more and more healthcare groups are partnering with staffing companies, which can provide provider coverage in the interim, allowing recruiters the time to find the right providers for their organization.

Here's what you need to consider:

1. Is this Agency the Right Partner for my Organization?

Before you can start finding quality providers, find a staffing company with a great reputation for solid business practices. Is the firm a member of NALTO and/or NAPR? How long has the company been in the industry? New or expanding company brand? Does the group's corporate philosophy align with your system's culture and can work as an extension of your organization? Obtaining referrals and using your instincts will serve you well. Find a firm that is open to investing in a long-term relationship by assisting you in achieving your recruitment goals and treats your organization as a true partner.

2. What Types of Services Can the Agency Offer and How Do They Fit Your Organization's Needs?

Not all agencies are built the same and the services each one offers can vary dramatically. Helpful questions to ask: what internal available resources does the group have access to find you candidates? How large is their recruitment staff? What is the tenure and experience of the recruiters? What type of specialization does the firm offer? Can they recruit for both locums coverage and permanent placement? What is their internal process to screen, interview and credential? Then take the conversation to the next level: ensure that you are working with a firm that takes pride in the providers it sends for your consideration. Look for an agency that invests time to understand your programs and service lines, with eliminating locums use and getting your team fully staffed as your shared goal.

3. What is the Cost of the Services?

As with all business relationships, a staffing firm also needs to provide real value to you to be worth the investment. And the importance of finding a company with full transparency on all rates and costs is critical. Ask for a comprehensive list of all fees. What is included in the fees? Job boards? Email or texting campaigns? Active calling physicians about your opportunity? Representation at virtual or onsite physician job fairs and conferences? Should you expect additional marketing costs for permanent placement searches? Standard locum services such as verifying education, work and all credentials and reference checks, as well as malpractice insurance coverage, should be included in the hourly rate. One of the most widespread misconceptions about hiring a staffing agency is that it's just too expensive. Why pay for locums coverage or recruitment fees when you could just hire a physician direct? But consider this: the longer a position is open, the higher the cost due to a loss in productivity and diverting resources. As healthcare facilities continue to deal with crucial provider coverage needs, staffing agencies have become a valuable resource for finding that talent quickly and efficiently.

4. How Will the Process Work?

Considering the incredibly busy schedule of the average physician recruiter, inquire about the prospective agency's work flow and determine if it works with your current capacity. Outline the communication plan and points of contact that you will be working with. Set expectations and confirm the agency fully understands your organization's process so that their team is finding a solution for your best outcome.

5. What are the Obligations with the New Partnership? Both for You AND the Agency?

Proposals and contracts can read differently so feel comfortable asking: are the services exclusive? How is "exclusivity" defined? Verify cancellation policies for locums and guarantees for permanent placements. What additional requirements are a priority to you and your organization? The clarity in which the agency communicates the terms of the partnership, contractually and otherwise, may provide insights on the type of partner they will be. To best maximize on your investment, use these questions to find the right staffing company for your organization. And once you've found one that provides high-quality service and high-quality providers, invest in the partnership with clear and responsive communication.

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844-607-5828

WorkforceOptimization@vistastaff.com

vistastaff.com/vista-select

VISTA



CORPORATE OFFICE
2800 EAST COTTONWOOD PARKWAY, SUITE 400
COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS, UT 84121

