



The nurse practitioner's locum tenens guide: *Getting started with locums*

CompHealth.

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Getting started

PART
1

If you're a nurse practitioner and you've heard the term locum tenens but aren't quite sure what it means, you're not alone. The phrase appears on job boards, in recruiter emails, and in conversations with colleagues. For many NPs, it may sound intriguing, but also a little opaque.

The reality is much simpler—and more flexible—than most people expect.

This guide breaks down what locum tenens work actually is, how it works for nurse practitioners, and why more NPs are choosing it as part of their career strategy.

What does “locum tenens” mean?

Locum tenens is a Latin term that means “to hold the place of.”

For nurse practitioners, locum tenens means taking temporary clinical assignments. While some NPs exclusively work locum tenens rather than holding a permanent position with a single employer, others take locums assignments on the side as a way to supplement their income while working a regular full-time job. Locum assignments come in every size, from a few days to several months, and they exist across a wide range of settings—from primary care clinics and hospitals to urgent care centers and specialty practices.

Locum tenens NPs are often called traveling NPs—although locum tenens assignments don't necessarily have to take you on the road. Many work locum tenens right in their home town.

In practical terms, a locum tenens nurse practitioner:

- Works on a contract basis
- Fills short-term or long-term staffing needs
- Chooses where to take assignments
- Works only when and how much they want

It's still full-scope clinical work—just without the long-term employment commitment.

See why locum tenens is an exciting option for nurse practitioners—offering the chance to fill vital staffing gaps while enjoying flexible schedules, diverse clinical experiences, and greater control over your career.

EXPLORE
LOCUM TENENS

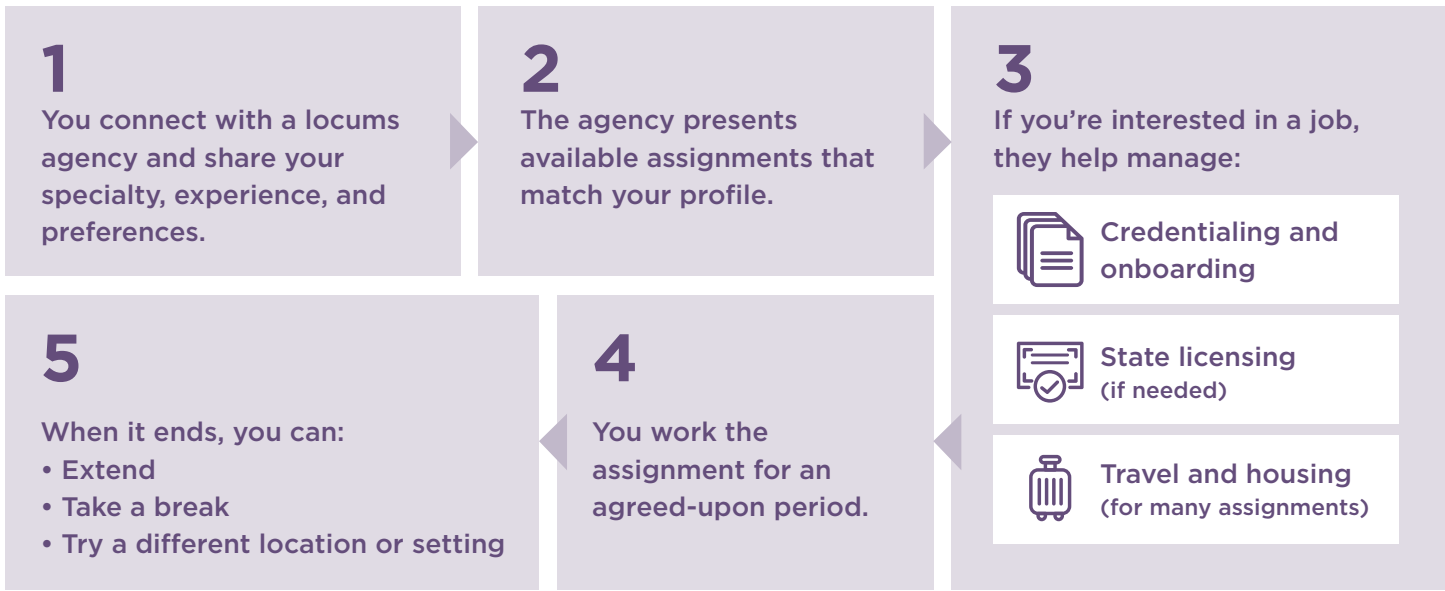


WHY WORK LOCUM TENENS?

How locum tenens works for nurse practitioners

Most NPs who work locums partner with a locum tenens agency. The agency acts as an intermediary between the clinician and the healthcare facility.

At a high level, the process usually looks like this:



The key thing to understand is that you're not navigating this alone. Agencies handle much of the administrative burden that typically makes job transitions stressful—especially credentialing and licensing, which can be significant barriers in traditional job searches.

Assignments exist in:

- Urban and rural settings
- Outpatient and inpatient care
- Short-term coverage roles
- Longer-term “trial” positions

And you can be as active or as selective as you want.



Why nurse practitioners choose locum tenens work

Nurse practitioners come to locums for many different reasons. Some are early in their careers and still exploring or want to earn extra money to pay off their student loans. Others are highly experienced and seeking greater control over their time. Many are burned out and want something that feels more sustainable.

One of the most common motivations is greater autonomy over how and when you work.

“I decided to try locums because I wanted more time and freedom—like being able to take off blocks of time together rather than just a week of vacation at a time.”
—Katherine Allen, family practice

Instead of negotiating PTO or squeezing rest into weekends, locums work allows NPs to build time off directly into their schedule.

For others, it's about career exploration.

Some NPs discover new specialties they never would have considered in a permanent role. Others use locums as a bridge between life transitions—moving, finishing school, recovering from burnout, or reassessing long-term goals.

For many NPs, locums work offers a low-risk way to explore new opportunities without committing to a permanent change.

“If you try it for three months and you don't like it, you never have to do it again. But if you don't try it, you might never get the experiences you're hoping for.”
—Michelle Freiburger, family practice

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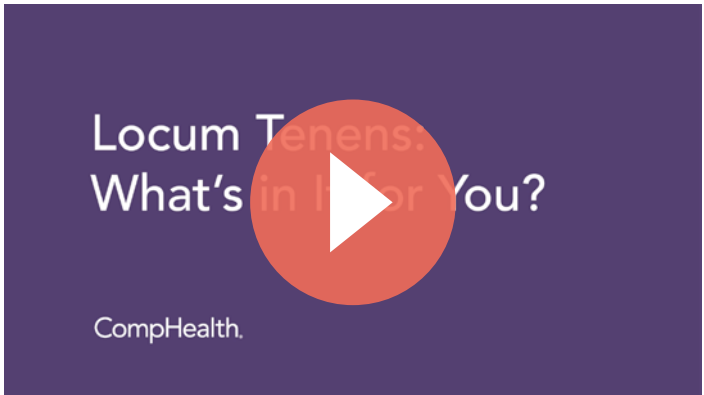
When I came back from New Zealand, I didn't know where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do. I didn't have any ties, and I wasn't quite sure where I was going to land. Working as a locum NP was absolutely perfect. Locums gave me that flexibility.

—Katherine Allen, family practice

In other cases, nurse practitioners find their way into locums work almost by chance.

“I had a few months in between jobs for credentialing, so I thought, ‘Why don't I just do some traveling?’ I did a three-month stint at the Grand Canyon, and I realized I really liked locums. And that's how it started.”—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine

What often surprises NPs is how quickly locums work becomes less of a temporary experiment and more of a long-term option.



LOCUM TENENS: WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

How locum tenens differs from permanent NP jobs

The most significant difference between locums and permanent work isn't clinical, it's structural. In a traditional role:

- You're employed by one organization
- You work a fixed schedule
- You accrue benefits and PTO
- You stay until you resign

In locums work:

- You choose each assignment
- You decide how long you work
- You can take breaks between roles
- Assignments end by design

That built-in endpoint changes the psychology of work. Instead of feeling locked into a role, many NPs describe feeling more in control of their career.

It also allows for:

- Geographic mobility
- More negotiation power
- The ability to step back without quitting healthcare entirely

Locums isn't necessarily "better" than permanent work, but it offers a different kind of autonomy that can be especially valuable during times of transition.

Of course, it isn't an either-or proposition. Many NPs maintain regular full-time employment and work locum tenens on the side.

Common misconceptions about locum tenens

Despite its growing popularity, locums work is still surrounded by myths.

Myth: It's only for new grads or semi-retired clinicians.

In reality, locum NPs span every career stage. Many facilities actually prefer experienced providers who can step in quickly with minimal training.

Myth: You have to move constantly.

Some NPs travel extensively. Others work locums within one region or even within commuting distance of home. Travel is an option, not a requirement.

Myth: It's only rural or undesirable positions.

While locums is essential for rural access, assignments exist everywhere—including major cities, academic centers, and specialty clinics.

Myth: You're completely on your own.

Most administrative work is handled by agencies, including:

- Credentialing
- Licensing support
- Housing and travel
- Contract logistics

The clinical work is independent, but the supporting infrastructure is highly robust.

A low-risk way to explore your options

Locum tenens isn't a lifelong commitment. It's a way to explore, experiment, and learn what kind of work actually fits your life.

For some NPs, it becomes a full-time career. For others, it's a short chapter or gig work. For many, it's a reset button. What makes locums uniquely appealing is that you can try it without locking yourself into anything.



KEEP YOUR
CAREER OPTIONS
OPEN



Pay, benefits, flexibility

PART
2

Pay, flexibility, and benefits explained

Many nurse practitioners who are considering locum tenens naturally want to know: Is it worth pursuing?

For most NPs, that question isn't abstract. It's about whether locums can realistically offer better pay, more control over time, and a sustainable alternative to traditional roles.

What does locum tenens offer in concrete terms? Here, we explore how pay compares to permanent roles, what benefits are available, what realistic flexibility is, and what NPs tend to gain (and give up) when they make the switch.

Locum tenens NP pay and earning potential

Locums isn't a bad fit if you value stability. But if you strongly prefer predictability, a deeply established team routine, or a long ramp-up period before starting somewhere new, it may feel more challenging at first.

That doesn't mean you should rule it out. It just means you should go into it with a clear understanding of your own working style and what kind of support you may need to succeed.

One of the biggest draws of locum tenens work is compensation. In many cases, locum nurse practitioners earn more per hour than they would in a permanent position.

That doesn't mean every assignment pays more than every staff job. Rates may vary by:

- Specialty
- Location
- Demand
- Length of assignment
- Level of experience

But across the board, locum tenens roles are often structured to be financially competitive because facilities are paying for temporary, high-need coverage.

"I'm definitely making way more than what I was making in a brick-and-mortar setting."—Nidhi Singh, family practice

“

Overall, the pay is significantly more. Even with extra housing costs, you still come out ahead.

—Katherine Allen, family practice

It's also important to look at compensation holistically. Many locums assignments include:

- Travel coverage
- Housing or housing stipends
- Licensing and credentialing support

When these costs are covered, it can meaningfully increase your overall take-home pay.

LOCUMS PAY
EXPLAINED

Benefits and W-2 security

A common misconception about locum tenens is that it's always independent contractor work. While some locum roles are structured as 1099 positions, many major agencies like CompHealth offer W-2 employment for advanced practitioners, which comes with traditional benefits.

This can include:

- Health, dental, and vision insurance
- 401(k) with company match
- Paid malpractice insurance with tail coverage
- Employee assistance programs

For many NPs, this structure provides a sense of continuity and security, even while working temporary assignments.

“This wasn’t a 1099 position. I was part of the team. I had an insurance plan I could sign up for, and I had a 401(k). It was like being employed. For me, that security mattered. I definitely felt secure.”
—Patricia Maybee, family practice

This hybrid model—flexible work with employed benefits—is one of the reasons locum tenens feels more sustainable than many people expect. You’re not necessarily trading stability for freedom. In many cases, you get a blend of both.

Beyond competitive pay: More benefits of working with CompHealth

- ✓ Benefits begin after 30 days on assignment
- ✓ Bridge health coverage between assignments
- ✓ Dental and vision insurance
- ✓ 401(k) with employer match
- ✓ Telehealth
- ✓ Employee Assistance Program
- ✓ Company-paid basic life insurance

HEALTH
INSURANCE,
401(K), AND
MORE

Schedule flexibility and work-life balance

Flexibility is where locum tenens tends to differ most dramatically from traditional NP roles.

Instead of negotiating PTO or waiting for seniority, locum clinicians build time off directly into their schedule. You decide when to work, how long to work, and when to take breaks.

For some NPs, this leads to life changes that would be almost impossible in a permanent job.

“This was the first time in my entire career that I had the week of Thanksgiving and the week of Christmas off.”—Diana Armstrong, orthopedic surgery

“No other job would allow me to take four to six months off to hike the Appalachian Trail and then come back.”—Michelle Freiburger, family practice

Even for those who don’t take extended sabbaticals, the ability to control timing can be transformative.

“I think there’s just more flexibility in locums. Permanent jobs don’t always let you take time off when you need it.”
—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine

Instead of structuring their lives around work, many NPs find they can finally structure work around their lives.

Travel opportunities and geographic choice

For NPs who enjoy travel—or want a change of scenery—locum tenens offers a unique way to explore new places without stepping away from clinical practice.

Assignments exist across:

- Rural and urban settings
- Coastal and mountain regions
- Large hospital systems and small clinics

Some NPs travel continuously. Others choose one region at a time. And some work close to home but use locums to try different facilities.

“I love being able to pick where I want to go and meet all kinds of different people.”
—Diana Armstrong, orthopedic surgery

“Being in Oregon made me want to explore the area around me. I really love experiencing the United States, and locums gives you that opportunity.”
—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine

For many, travel isn’t just about tourism; it’s about seeing how healthcare operates in different environments and learning from diverse teams and patient populations.

TAKE A
SABBATICAL
WITH LOCUMS

Professional variety and skill expansion

Another significant advantage of locums work is exposure to diverse clinical environments, patient needs, and organizational cultures. Instead of staying in one system for years, NPs rotate through different settings, workflows, and clinical cultures.

Over time, this can help:

- Strengthen clinical confidence
- Improve adaptability
- Expand procedural skills
- Clarify long-term career goals

Locums can serve as a form of real-world continuing education, allowing many NPs to discover new specialties they enjoy, leadership interests they hadn't anticipated, and, just as importantly, settings that aren't the right fit for them.

Pros and cons vs. traditional employment

Like any career model, locum tenens comes with both advantages and limitations, so understanding both sides can help you decide whether it aligns with your long-term career plans.

Potential advantages:

- Higher hourly pay
- Flexible scheduling
- Geographic freedom
- Professional variety
- Reduced long-term burnout risk
- Employed benefits (in W-2 roles)

Potential tradeoffs:

- Less continuity with patients
- Repeated onboarding processes
- Temporary team relationships
- Periods without assignments (if you choose to take breaks)
- Less institutional loyalty or advancement within one system

Some NPs miss the stability of a long-term workplace. Others find the lack of permanence liberating. Much of it comes down to personal preference and one's life and career stage.

So, is locum tenens worth it?

For many nurse practitioners, the answer is yes—not because locums is perfect, but because it offers a rare combination of pay, flexibility, and professional freedom.

Locum tenens can allow NPs to earn competitively, explore new practice settings, reclaim work-life balance, and have more control over their time without stepping away from clinical practice or sacrificing long-term career growth.



WHY I CHOSE LOCUMS WITH NP EBONY THYME





Choosing an agency

PART
3

How to choose a locum tenens agency as a nurse practitioner

For many nurse practitioners, the appeal of locum tenens work is clear: control over your schedule, exposure to different practice settings, and the opportunity to build a more adaptable career. But the reality is that locums comes with its own learning curve. From

understanding state requirements to evaluating assignments, having the right support system can make the difference between a smooth transition and a stressful one—especially if you’re new to locums work. That’s where a locum tenens agency comes in.

A strong agency doesn’t just place you in a role. It acts as a long-term partner, helping you navigate the logistics so you can focus on what matters most: patient care.

What locum tenens agencies do for NPs

At its core, a locum tenens agency acts as the bridge between healthcare providers and facilities in need of temporary staffing. Agencies typically handle:

- Placement: Matching you with assignments that fit your specialty, schedule, and career goals.
- Licensing and credentialing support: Managing the complex paperwork required for multiple states.
- Administrative support: Handling contracts, pay, malpractice coverage, and more.
- Advocacy: Serving as your advocate with facilities and supporting you throughout each assignment.

Instead of juggling dozens of tasks yourself, you have a single point of contact guiding the entire process.

Beyond these core services, agencies also serve as a source of market insight. Because they work with hundreds or thousands of providers, they can offer guidance on competitive pay rates, in-demand specialties, and realistic timelines for placement. This perspective can be especially valuable for NPs who are new to locums work and unsure what to expect.

“CompHealth is so helpful with licensure, getting my package together, and exploring opportunities. They were just marvelous.”—Patricia Maybee, family practice

Benefits of using an agency vs. going solo

Some NPs prefer to find their own assignments; however, it often requires significant time and organizational skills. You’re responsible for sourcing opportunities, negotiating terms, managing tax considerations, acquiring your own medical and retirement benefits, and ensuring compliance with facility requirements. For many NPs, the administrative load quickly outweighs the perceived benefits, especially when combined with full clinical schedules.

An agency reduces much of the administrative burden by handling paperwork and logistics on your behalf, giving you faster access to opportunities through established relationships with healthcare facilities, and providing ongoing support.

Agencies centralize these responsibilities, allowing you to focus your energy where it matters most—on patient care and professional growth.

“All the teams at CompHealth work together really well, and the flow is very easy. It’s a well-oiled machine, and that’s impressive to me.”—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine

Licensing and credentialing made easier

Licensing and credentialing are often the most significant barriers for NPs entering locums work. Each state has different requirements, and facilities may request overlapping but slightly different documentation. Maintaining multiple state licenses can be daunting, but an experienced agency will guide you through the process.

A reputable agency will:

- Help identify which licenses you need
- Organize and submit documentation
- Track expiration dates and requirements
- Coordinate directly with credentialing teams

Agencies streamline this process by acting as a coordinator between you, state boards, and healthcare facilities. This support can save you significant time and reduce the risk of delays between assignments.

*“Credentialing can be stressful, but CompHealth made it really easy.”
—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine*

Over time, this support can also help you build a portable professional profile that makes future assignments easier to secure.

HEAR FROM A
LOCUMS PRO

5 strategies for maintaining multiple state licenses

- 1 Get—and stay—organized
- 2 Review what licenses you really need
- 3 Set smart reminders
- 4 Make continuing education a habit
- 5 Consider licensing software

How to choose an agency

Selecting the right agency is about trust, experience, and fit. You’re not just choosing a company to place you in a role—you’re choosing a partner to support your career.

Start with reputation. Look for agencies with strong reviews and testimonials from other nurse practitioners. Consistent, positive feedback is often a good indicator of reliability and provider satisfaction.

Next, consider support services. A strong agency should help with licensing, credentialing, and logistics, reducing administrative burden and making transitions between assignments smoother.

Finally, pay attention to communication style. You want an agency that is responsive and transparent, sets clear expectations, and follows through. Good communication builds trust and makes the locums experience far less stressful.



“I trust my recruiter to do what’s right for me and go to bat for me if needed”—Terry Rand, cardiovascular/ cardiothoracic surgery

It’s also worth considering whether an agency specializes in working with nurse practitioners. Some agencies primarily focus on physicians and may not fully understand NP-specific credentialing pathways or scope-of-practice considerations. An agency with a strong NP track record is more likely to anticipate potential challenges and advocate effectively on your behalf.

PAIR WITH THE
RIGHT LOCUMS
PARTNER

We know the locums industry because we created it

VARIETY OF JOBS

- Access to our vast, nationwide network of facilities
- Thousands of short- and long-term jobs across virtually every specialty
- Temporary and permanent staffing for physicians, NPs, PAs, therapists, medical lab professionals, and other healthcare positions

SUPPORT AT EVERY STEP

- Access to our specialized, in-house credentialing and licensing team
- Access to highly skilled customer service specialists who are available from day one to assist you through the entire process
- Access to our support before, during, and after every assignment

Questions NPs should ask before working with an agency

Before committing to an agency, it's important to ask a few key questions to understand how they operate and what level of support you can expect.

These questions aren't just about gathering information—they're also a way to assess how transparent and responsive the agency is. The quality of their answers often reflects how they'll communicate once you're actively working together.

Questions to ask before choosing a locums agency

1. How are assignments matched to my skills and preferences?
2. What is your process for credentialing and onboarding?
3. What is your policy for pay, malpractice coverage, and contract terms?
4. How do you support NPs with multi-state licensure?
5. Can you provide references from other NPs who have worked with you?
6. Are there any additional benefits you offer your locum NPs?

Common myths about locum tenens agencies

Myth: Agencies are only interested in filling positions quickly.

Fact: A reputable agency focuses on matching providers with opportunities that align with their career goals.

Myth: Using an agency is expensive.

Fact: Assignments are fully paid by the facility; the NP's compensation isn't reduced.

Myth: Locums agencies only offer short-term or last-minute work.

Fact: Many agencies place NPs in long-term or recurring assignments, making locums a viable option for sustained income and career stability.

Myth: Once you start with one agency, you're locked in.

Fact: You can work with multiple agencies, but staying with a trusted company can provide consistency and peace of mind.

“Once I find a company I respect and trust, I stay. If I keep coming back, that means I trust the company.”—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine

Ultimately, choosing the right agency is about finding a balance between professional support and personal alignment. The best agency relationships feel collaborative rather than transactional, with recruiters who understand your goals, respect your boundaries, and advocate for your interests over time.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A LOCUMS AGENCY

Why nurse practitioners choose to work with CompHealth

1. Our expert teams can coach you on how to land a new job, including evaluating offers, improving your interviewing skills, and negotiating your NP contract.
2. We have long-standing relationships with healthcare facilities nationwide, giving us better insight into their hiring processes and how to help you stand out from the competition.
3. We can assist you with licensing, credentialing and privileging, and malpractice coverage as needed.
4. We provide fully furnished housing for the duration of your assignment.
5. You'll have a team that's on call 24/7 to help with any issues you may run into while on assignment with us.



Recruiter and contract

PART
4

How to choose the right recruiter and contract

At this stage of considering locum tenens, many nurse practitioners are asking a critical question: Who should I work with, and what should I agree to?

For many NPs, this is the point where locums work becomes real. The choices you make here can influence not only your first assignment, but how sustainable and enjoyable locums feels over time.

Choosing the right recruiter and understanding your contract are the foundation for a positive locums experience. The right guidance can make the process smoother, reduce stress, and give you confidence that your assignments will meet both your professional and personal needs.

What makes a good locums recruiter

A strong recruiter is your primary point of contact, advocate, and resource throughout each assignment. Finding someone you trust can make all the difference.

While agencies provide the infrastructure, your recruiter is the person you'll interact with most. They are the ones translating your preferences into real opportunities and advocating for your interests with facilities. In many ways, the recruiter relationship is as important as the contract itself.

Key traits to look for in a recruiter include:

- **Curiosity:** They ask questions to get to know you and understand your goals.
- **Responsiveness:** They answer questions promptly and provide regular updates.
- **Transparency:** They explain assignment details, compensation, and expectations clearly.
- **Respect and professionalism:** They treat you as a partner, not just a temporary worker.
- **Expertise:** They understand the ins-and-outs of your specialty.

A strong recruiter should also be willing to say no on your behalf. If an assignment doesn't truly fit your skills or goals, a good recruiter won't pressure you to accept it just to fill a role. Instead, they'll help you wait for the right opportunity.

This level of honesty builds trust and prevents mismatches that can lead to dissatisfaction or burnout.

"I just felt like I could trust my recruiter. He wasn't pushy—he wanted me to succeed."—Michelle Freiburger, family practice

My recruiter is very respectful and very nice—that goes a long way. We have a good camaraderie and respect for each other, and that matters.

—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine

Beyond personality, a good recruiter keeps communication open throughout your assignment. They should be available to answer questions, reassess your preferences, and help you troubleshoot challenges.

"I could say, 'What do you have available? Where can I go? What can I do?' That ongoing communication mattered. It's good to be able to work closely with your contact person and reassess as things change."—Patricia Maybee, family practice



Negotiable vs. non-negotiable terms

Not all contract terms are set in stone. Many NPs successfully negotiate assignments to fit their needs, but it helps to know what is typically flexible. Understanding which elements are flexible and which are fixed can help you approach negotiations with confidence. Of course, your recruiter will advocate for you every step of the way.

Negotiable terms:

- Hourly or daily rate
- Travel and housing stipends
- Start and end dates
- Fair contract termination terms
- Call schedules or shift preferences

Generally non-negotiable terms

- Facility-required licensing procedures
- Minimum malpractice coverage
- Legal requirements related to your scope of practice

When evaluating terms, remember you always have options. If an assignment doesn't accommodate what you need, it's okay to look for another role that does. Negotiation isn't about being combative—it's about ensuring clarity and alignment between you, your recruiter, and the facility.

“If they don’t accommodate what you need, you find another assignment that will.”—Diana Armstrong, orthopedic surgery



HOW TO
SUCCESSFULLY
NEGOTIATE
YOUR LOCUMS
CONTRACT

Tips for entering locums with confidence

With the right approach, entering locum tenens doesn't have to feel overwhelming. A few practical steps can help you navigate assignments.

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Ask questions early and often
Don't wait until the start date to clarify expectations.
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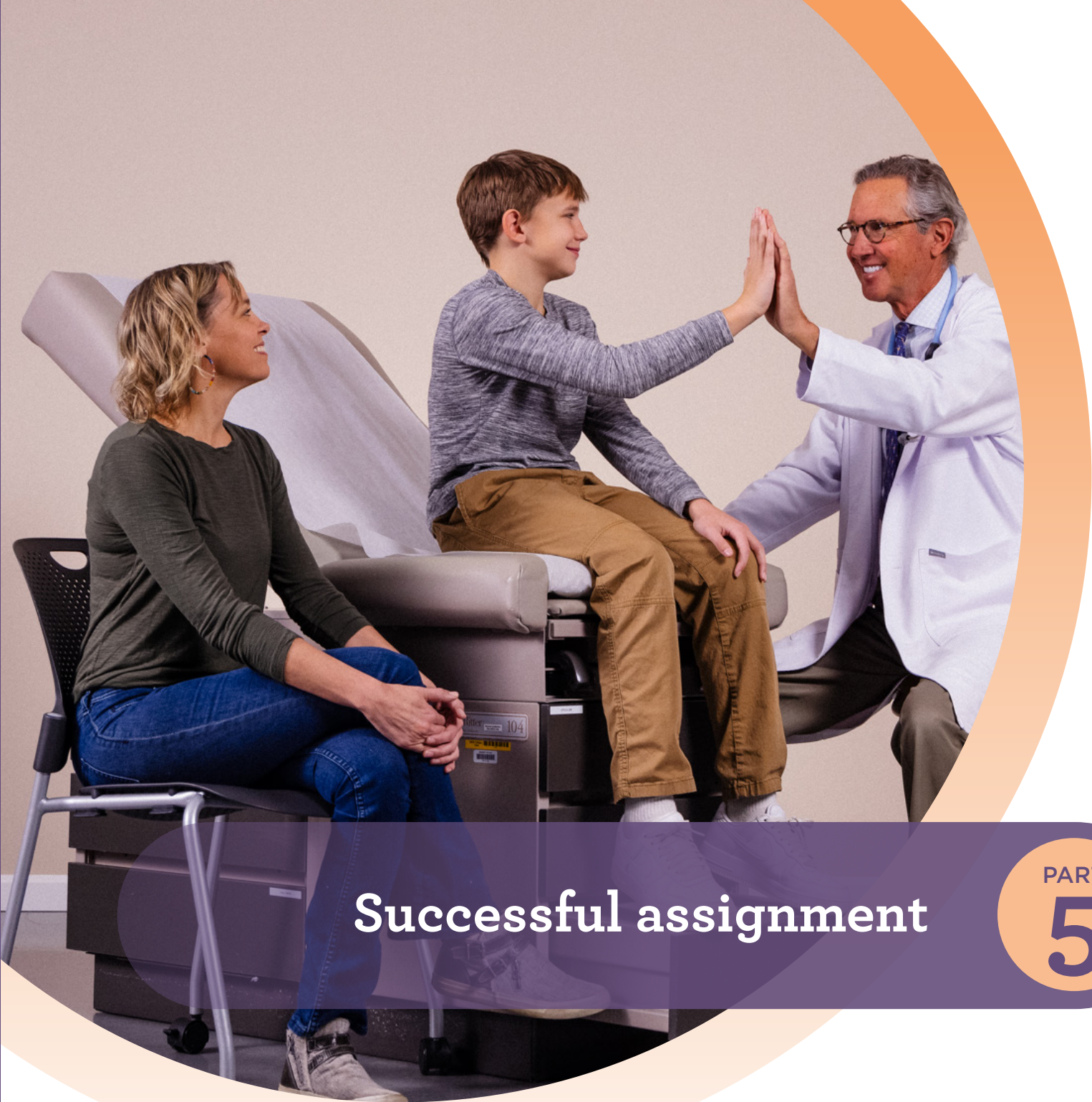
Document agreements
Keep a copy of your contract and any negotiated changes.
- 

Keep communication open
Regularly chat with your recruiter about your needs and preferences.
- 

Trust your instincts
The right recruiter and assignment should feel professional, transparent, and supportive.
- 

Know your limits
Understand what's non-negotiable versus what's flexible so you can make informed choices quickly.

By taking the time to choose the right recruiter and thoroughly review your contract, you set yourself up for a smoother, more enjoyable locums experience—one where you can focus on patient care and professional growth rather than administrative uncertainty.



Successful assignment

PART
5

How nurse practitioners can succeed in a locum tenens assignment

Accepting a locum tenens assignment is an exciting step, but stepping into a new facility—often for just a few weeks or months—can feel daunting. Success in locums work isn’t just about clinical skills; it’s about preparation, communication, and adaptability. By approaching each assignment strategically, nurse practitioners can build strong relationships, navigate workflows efficiently, and set themselves up for repeat opportunities.

Preparing for your first assignment

Preparation begins long before you step into a new facility. Take time to review the assignment details, including patient population, scope of practice, schedule, and facility expectations. Ask your recruiter for orientation materials or tips from previous clinicians who have worked there. Understanding the culture, common workflows, and electronic health record systems in advance can save hours of adjustment during the first few days.

It’s also important to plan for practical logistics: travel, housing, state licensing, and any required documentation. Being organized from the start allows you to focus on patient care and relationship-building once the assignment begins.

Onboarding and orientation tips

Every facility has its own onboarding process, and how you navigate it can set the tone for your assignment. Treat orientation as both a learning period and an opportunity to observe and understand institutional standards. Ask questions, clarify expectations, and take notes for future reference.

“You have to remember you’re a guest in their institution and adapt to how they do things.”—Kezia Cottenoir, family practice

Showing respect for local policies, protocols, and culture demonstrates professionalism and helps staff view you as part of the team, even in a temporary role.

Adapting quickly to new processes

Locum tenens work often requires rapid adaptation. Different facilities may have unique electronic health record systems, documentation standards, or care protocols. Being proactive, observant, and willing to adjust your routines—from how you chart to how you communicate with staff—is critical for maintaining efficiency, ensuring patient safety, and building trust with your new team.

“If you’re going to be in locums, you have to be adaptable. You have to be open-minded. If you can’t roll with the punches, locums isn’t for you.

—Patricia Maybee, family practice

*“You have to be really flexible and able to enter an environment you’re not used to. You have to be a team player.”
—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine*

Flexibility isn’t just about adapting to protocols—it also means collaborating effectively with staff, anticipating patient needs, and adjusting smoothly to unexpected changes in your schedule or patient load.

**START STRONG:
NP TIPS FOR
YOUR FIRST
ASSIGNMENT**

Building strong relationships

Relationships are at the heart of a successful assignment. Taking the time to observe team dynamics, understand individual roles, listen actively, and offer support when needed not only builds trust but also helps the workflow run more smoothly.

Small gestures—such as checking in with nurses, acknowledging the efforts of administrative staff, or adapting to your supervising providers' preferences—can go a long way toward establishing credibility and rapport.

“Once you win over the staff, the rest is easy.”—Linda Bell, family practice

Strong relationships also open doors for repeat assignments, positive references, and long-term professional networking. Staff and administrators who feel respected and supported are more likely to recommend you for future opportunities, making these connections invaluable for sustaining a successful locums career.

Working in unique settings

Some locums assignments place nurse practitioners in specialized or culturally distinct environments, such as Native American or

“

Don't let preconceived notions guide what you think Native American Health might be. The family structure, their care for each other, their culture and language—it was a wonderful experience.

—Patricia Maybee, family practice



Tribal Health facilities, rural clinics, or hospitals serving unique populations. Success in these settings requires sensitivity, humility, and openness, along with a willingness to learn from the community and staff around you.

Taking the time to understand community norms, patient expectations, and institutional culture allows NPs to provide high-quality, culturally competent care while building strong relationships with both patients and staff. Approaching each assignment with curiosity and respect not only enhances patient outcomes but also enriches your own professional growth.

Avoiding common early mistakes

Early missteps in a locums assignment often stem from assumptions, lack of communication, or inflexibility. Common pitfalls include:

- Assuming workflows are the same as your previous facility
- Avoiding questions for fear of appearing inexperienced
- Not clarifying schedule or call expectations upfront
- Underestimating the importance of team dynamics

Being proactive, communicative, and adaptable can help prevent these issues and ensure your assignment runs smoothly. By addressing potential challenges head-on and maintaining a collaborative mindset, NPs can quickly build credibility, earn their team's trust, and set themselves up for a positive, successful locums experience.

Key takeaways for success

- 1 Prepare in advance**
Know your assignment details, facility expectations, and logistical requirements.
- 2 Approach onboarding strategically**
Observe, ask questions, and integrate quickly into workflows.
- 3 Adapt to new environments**
Flexibility and openness are essential for navigating different systems and patient populations.
- 4 Build relationships**
Collaborate with staff, engage with patients, and establish trust early.
- 5 Respect unique settings**
Cultural sensitivity and humility go a long way in specialized environments.
- 6 Communicate clearly**
Don't hesitate to clarify expectations, ask questions, and address concerns promptly.

With preparation, communication, and adaptability, nurse practitioners can not only succeed in their first locums assignment but also set themselves up for future opportunities—making each experience smoother, more rewarding, and professionally enriching.



Long-term success

PART
6

Can locum tenens be a long-term career for nurse practitioners?

For many nurse practitioners, locum tenens starts as a temporary solution—a way to explore new settings, gain flexibility, or take a break between permanent roles. But increasingly, NPs are discovering that locums can be more than a short-term option: It can be a sustainable, fulfilling career strategy that supports professional growth, financial stability, and work-life balance over the long term.

Preventing burnout and sustaining a career

One of the most compelling reasons NPs choose locums work for the long haul is its potential to prevent or recover from burnout. Unlike permanent roles that often demand fixed schedules, rigid responsibilities, or long commutes, locums assignments give NPs control over where, when, and how they work. This flexibility can be critical for maintaining passion and energy for patient care.

“I can’t imagine going back to a regular job again.”—Michelle Freiburger, family practice

By allowing clinicians to take breaks between assignments, choose roles that align with their interests, and avoid overstretched schedules, locums can extend both career longevity and professional satisfaction.

“I wish I’d done it ten years earlier.”—Patricia Gambrell, acute care

Financial planning and income stability

Another major advantage of long-term locums work is the financial flexibility and security it offers. Many NPs find that they can plan for income stability, retirement, or other financial goals while maintaining control over how much they work.

Unlike the perception that temporary work is precarious, locums often provides consistent pay, benefits, and reimbursed expenses, giving NPs confidence that they can support their lifestyle while remaining independent.

“I’ve never been without a paycheck, and I’ve always been able to work as much or as little as I wanted.”—Patricia Gambrell, acute care

This combination of autonomy and financial stability allows NPs to balance professional and personal priorities, whether that means traveling, pursuing hobbies, or spending time with family—all without sacrificing career momentum.

LOCUMS CAN
HELP YOU LOVE
MEDICINE AGAIN

Locums as a bridge or transition

Locum tenens can also serve as a bridge to new opportunities. Some NPs use locums to explore specialties, work settings, or geographic locations before committing to a permanent role. Others use locums to transition into full-time employment with a facility, testing the fit for both parties before making a long-term decision.

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They kept renewing my contract over and over, and eventually they offered me a full-time role. Locums gave me stability without forcing me into a permanent decision too quickly.

—Patricia Maybee, family practice

For clinicians considering semi-retirement, a sabbatical, or a temporary break from traditional employment, locums provides a way to continue practicing medicine on their own terms without the constraints of a permanent position. This flexible pathway provides professional exploration while minimizing risk—allowing NPs to shape a career that aligns with their values and goals.

Don't want to work into your twilight years?
How one NP is using locums to retire early

Flexibility without relocation

Long-term locums work doesn't always mean constant travel. Many NPs structure assignments close to home or in regions they enjoy, combining career variety with personal stability. This approach can provide the best of both worlds: the flexibility and autonomy of locums, with the comfort of a permanent life.

“You can have a permanent life with temporary assignments.”—Patricia Maybee, family practice

By tailoring assignments to lifestyle preferences, NPs can design a career path that supports both work satisfaction and life outside of work.

Networking and long-term professional growth

In addition to flexibility and financial security, long-term locums work offers unique professional growth opportunities. Exposure to different facilities and patient populations allows NPs to develop a broad skill set, learn new workflows, and build a national professional network. This diversity of experience can strengthen clinical confidence, open doors to leadership roles, and provide insights into what settings or specialties are the best fit for each individual.

“Locums lets you see different work settings and helps you identify what really fits.”—Kelly Lueck, emergency medicine

These connections and experiences aren't just valuable for immediate assignments—they create a foundation for future opportunities, whether continuing in locums, transitioning into a permanent role, or blending the two.

Combining locums with permanent or part-time work

Some NPs find a hybrid approach works best: maintaining part-time permanent employment while supplementing with locums assignments. This provides a balance of stability and flexibility, allowing clinicians to enjoy the benefits of a permanent role while exploring different settings, patient populations, or geographic areas through locums.

Over time, this combination can evolve in different ways. Some NPs shift more toward full-time locums work as they gain experience and build professional networks, while others use locums strategically to supplement income, take sabbaticals, or pursue lifestyle priorities—all without sacrificing continuity in their permanent role. Locum tenens can be tailored to support both career goals and life outside of work.

Locum tenens as a long-term career

Far from being a stopgap, locum tenens can be a strategic, sustainable, and fulfilling career choice for nurse practitioners. Whether your goals are to prevent burnout, explore specialties, maintain flexibility, or build financial security, locums offers tools and pathways to craft a career that fits your life.

With careful planning, the right assignments, and strong relationships with recruiters and facilities, NPs can make locum tenens a core part of their professional journey—not just a temporary detour.

The big picture: Locums as a career

Locum tenens can offer nurse practitioners a unique combination of flexibility, variety, and growth. With thoughtful preparation and a collaborative mindset, NPs can build a sustainable career that fits their lifestyle, expands their skills, and keeps their passion for patient care alive—all without the constraints of a traditional permanent role.

Ready to get started in locum tenens?

We can help you get started as a locum tenens nurse practitioner. We're the experts, and we make it easy. Our staffing resources cost you nothing and require no commitment—besides letting our representatives get to know you better so they can understand your unique situation, preferences, and goals. Put us to work and see how we leverage our industry experience and job network to help you find a career opportunity that offers you more financial, professional, and personal rewards.

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