

# The shortage solution.

Improving retention, recruiting and patient outcomes in rural hospitals.

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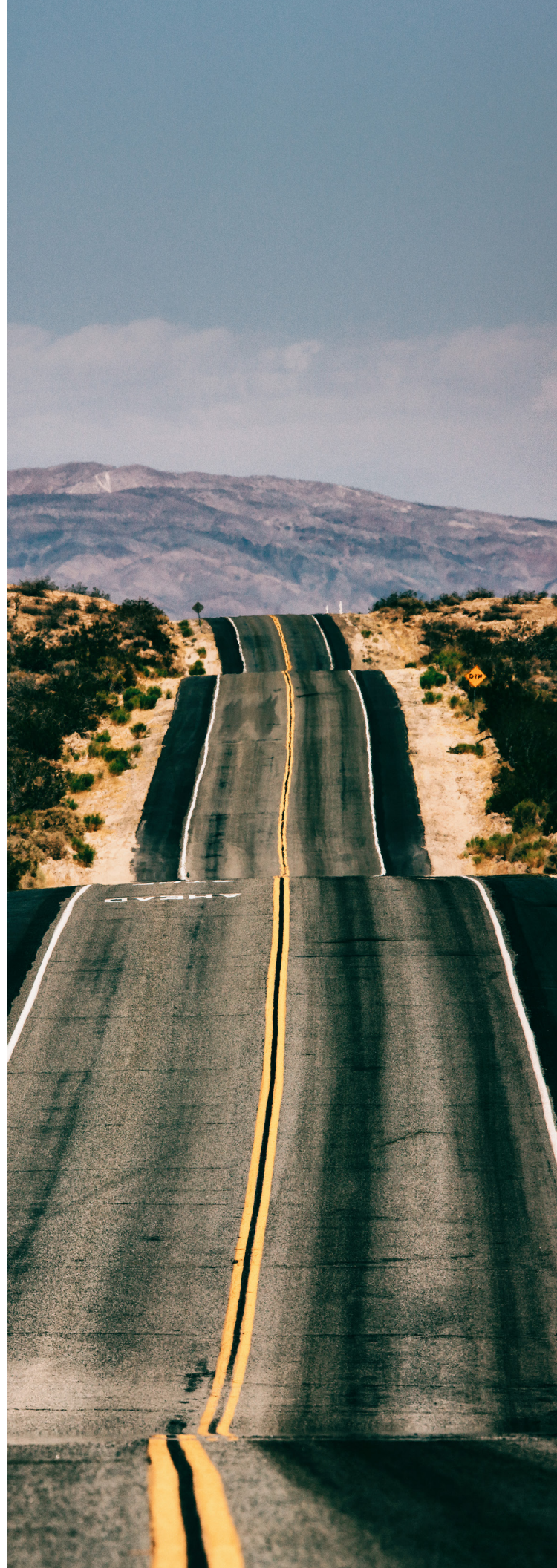
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## The realities of rural healthcare.

The numbers are striking. By the year 2030, the United States is facing a possible shortage of up to 120,000 physicians.<sup>1</sup> Then there's the nursing shortage. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 2024, there will be over 1 million open positions for registered nurses.<sup>2</sup> One thing we know for sure is that rural areas are feeling the effects even more than urban centers because nurses tend to stay close to where they received their education and professional training. Rural hospitals typically aren't close to a nursing school, so it's hard to draw from a pool of recent graduates. Plus, it's tough for rural hospitals to compete with the benefits and compensation that larger facilities can offer. No matter what the actual shortage numbers are, the truth remains: The average age of registered nurses in the U.S. is close to 44 years old. And only about 10 percent of the nursing population is younger than 30.<sup>3</sup> We need more nurses.

### **FUSION FACT:**

Traveling nurses have been shown to provide the same level of care and patient satisfaction as staff nurses.<sup>4</sup>





## Calling in reinforcements.

There are many factors that have contributed to the nursing shortage, so a permanent fix is going to take some time. Until then, partnering with a dedicated staffing agency is a solution worth considering, especially for rural and critical access hospitals strapped for time and resources. Temporary staff and traveling nurses are already being placed at hospitals around the country in order to uphold the standards of patient care during the shortage. **In this white paper, you'll learn how a staffing partner like Fusion can help streamline operations, improve retention and recruiting (for full-time nurses and physicians), and maintain positive patient outcomes.**

**"I only travel to small hospitals because it's very rewarding for me to get to know patients and their families."**

– Sheri Anderson, traveling nurse

## Less burnout, more retention.

Filling temporary positions can benefit your full-time staff. In a staffing crisis like today's, hospitals are struggling to hold on to full-time employees as well as add new ones. The lack of nurses and physicians means there's an epidemic of burnout that comes from working extra to cover the gaps. In fact, nurses working more than 10-hour shifts were found to be two and a half times more likely than nurses working shorter hours to report job dissatisfaction and burnout symptoms.<sup>6</sup> Too many open positions that aren't being filled leads to breakdowns in communication, employees working outside of their capability or preferences, and a host of other problems that can pollute workplace culture. Plus, hospitals are working to draw nurses and physicians away from their employers using greater compensation and benefits—an area where it's especially hard for rural hospitals to compete.





**By 2024, there will be over 1 million open positions for registered nurses.**

## **More nurses means greater work-life balance.**

The positive effects of temporary staff on recruiting and retention go hand in hand. Traveling nurses and locum tenens make it possible for physicians and full-time nursing staff to be covered for nights, weekends, vacations, illness, parental leave and other time off. As a result, full-time staff is less likely to work overtime, get burnt out and start looking for more lucrative opportunities elsewhere. Plus, hospitals may not have to pay their staff to work so many overtime hours. Regarding recruitment, the slower pace of rural living is a big draw to physicians and nurses who have spent a lot of time in bigger markets that are hectic and hypercompetitive with a long commute. Knowing that they'll be able to connect with a smaller community of patients and that there's a plan in place to make sure they can take necessary time away from a demanding job only strengthens the appeal for taking a full-time rural position.

## **Outsourcing operations.**

There are a lot of administrative boxes to check when coordinating outside nursing help. Partnering with a staffing agency can alleviate some of the stress that comes with juggling credentialing complexities across state lines. Plus, a good staffing agency partner will provide support beyond just checking the boxes. You won't just be preventing potential legal headaches by relying on their staffing expertise; you'll also be saving all the time it would take to recruit and communicate with candidates on your own. So how do you know you're partnering with a reliable staffing agency?

## What to look for in a staffing agency partner:



### Access to a large talent pool

The ideal partner will have a range of nurses and specialty positions like lab techs and radiologists. With a long list of skilled medical professionals who are already vetted, they'll be able to fill any opening on short notice.



### Administrative expertise

As mentioned earlier, a staffing agency partner should know the differences in licensing requirements from state to state and exactly how to prepare potential staff for quick turnaround placements.



### Ongoing support

It's important to have a solid working relationship with your staffing partner. After all, you're paying them to provide a service that should help make your job easier, so you can put more attention toward patient care and other areas of need.

**By reducing burnout and improving retention with temporary staff, patients are being tended to by medical professionals who are fulfilled and well-supported.**

## How to best work with your temporary staff.

Once you have temporary support in place, maintaining a happy arrangement is a two-way street. According to a recent study of temporary workers by Staffing Industry Analysts, there are several ways you can support your temporary staff so everyone has a good experience.<sup>5</sup>

A thorough orientation and onboarding process helps ensure that nurses know exactly what their responsibilities and goals are. Once in the position, it's important to treat temporary staff with the same level of respect and friendliness as regular employees. Your temporary staff will feel comfortable and empowered, and patients won't be able to tell a difference between full-time and temporary caregivers, which helps maintain patient satisfaction.

## How staffing puts patients first.

We've talked a lot about how temporary staff can support nurses and physicians and how a staffing partner can support operations, but what about patients? After all, the primary goal of any hospital is to provide the best possible care for their patients. For rural hospitals, this is especially important because your patients are part of your close-knit community. The great news is that temporary staffing ultimately supports positive patient outcomes. For one, extensive research has shown that there is a direct correlation between employee satisfaction and patient care.<sup>6</sup> So by reducing burnout and improving retention with temporary staff, patients are being tended to by medical professionals who are fulfilled and well-supported.

In some states, there are measures enforcing a specific patient-nurse ratio to try to ensure patient safety and survival. There are mixed feelings about the effectiveness of laws like these, but should that trend continue, you'll be prepared with a staffing partner you trust. Fixing the nursing shortage, for both rural hospitals and those in bigger markets, means being flexible and working together to reach a sustainable solution. A staffing partner is a great first step to give your staff and patients everything they need in the meantime.



**Extensive research has shown that there is a direct correlation between employee satisfaction and patient care.**



# Staff up and rock on with Fusion.

**When you need high-quality healthcare professionals in a pinch, count on us to deliver.**

Our roster runs deep with passionate people across the country who have a wide range of talents. We don't just fill gaps in staffing; we find the right people for the job. It's a philosophy that's made us an award-winning staffing firm to work for and with. We'd love to know how we could support your rural hospital.

**"Rural or small hospitals are very grateful to have experienced travelers. We are treated like we're staff."**

– Sheri Anderson, traveling nurse

## *Fusion*

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