

Guide to Nurse Staffing Post-COVID-19

Navigating nurse staffing challenges
following the pandemic.



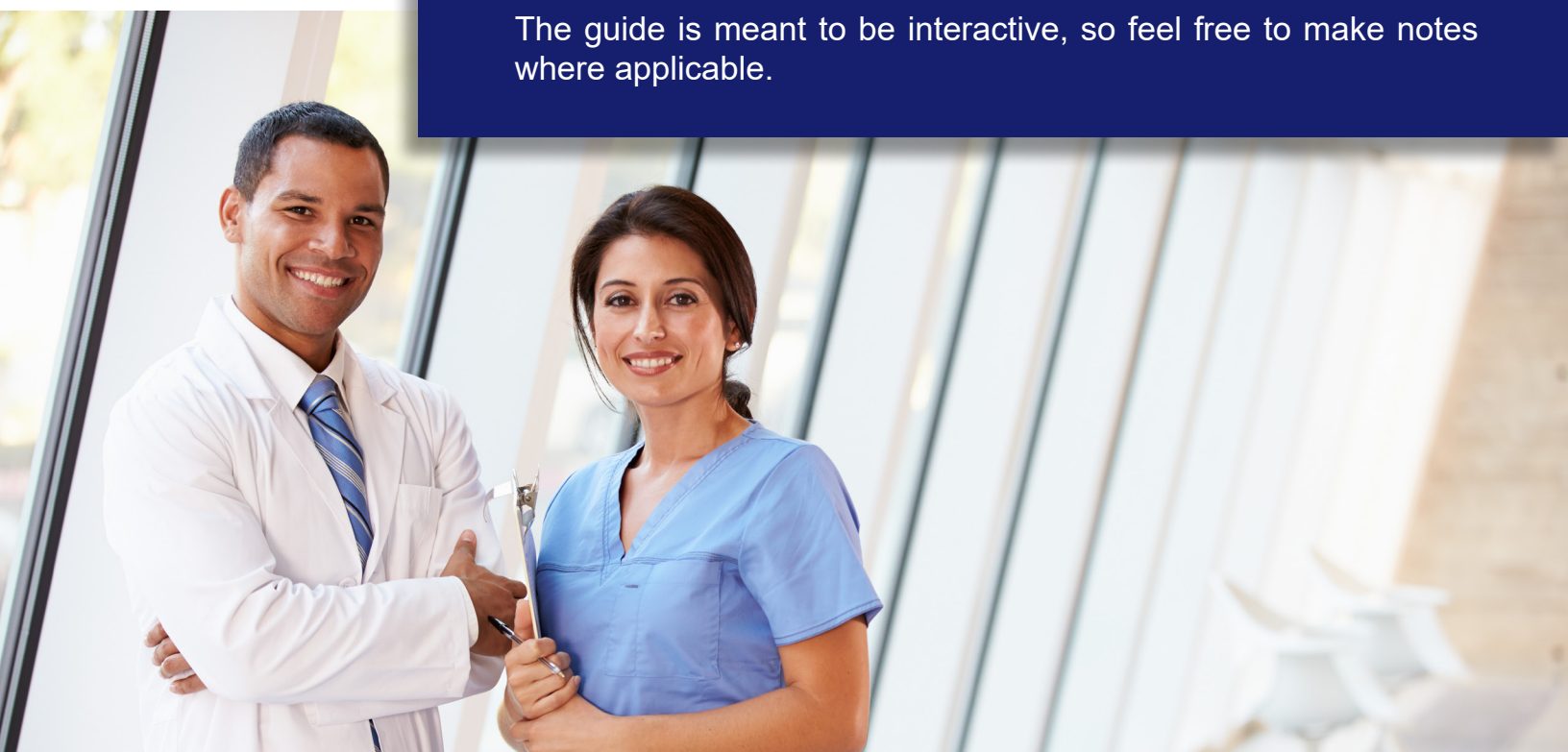
How will you define your staffing strategy post-COVID-19?

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the face of the U.S. healthcare system, and will undoubtedly impact the future of bedside nursing for years to come. This guide is intended for nurse leaders and healthcare executives to determine their RN staffing strategy in a post-COVID-19 world. This guide offers insight and informational material to help leaders decide ways to best staff their units to improve patient outcomes.

How to Use this Guide

This booklet will guide you through the process of creating your nurse staffing plan. It is meant to help nurse leaders assess the current state of their staff, analyze common staffing challenges, and identify new areas of opportunity.

The guide is meant to be interactive, so feel free to make notes where applicable.



Define your SMART goals

Your organization should have goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. As a nurse leader, it's your responsibility to ensure everyone on your team clearly understands your goals. **How have your goals changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?**
Write in the goals you would like to achieve for each of the categories below.

Organization Goals By When? How We Will Measure Success

Patient Satisfaction		
Culture		
Nurse staffing / Placements		
Financial / Organizational		

Assess current state of units

COVID-19 has affected healthcare facilities differently. While densely populated urban areas have been hit with an overwhelming influx of patients, rural communities have struggled with severe financial strains resulting from COVID-19, putting them on the brink of closure.

Determining the state of your facility can help identify areas of opportunity for your staff and can help them best acclimate to a new post-COVID-19 culture. When doing a SWOT analysis, use strengths and weaknesses as internal factors, and use opportunities and threats as external variables that could impact your organization.

<p>Strengths</p> <p><i>Ex. Strong culture, quick ramp-up on elective procedures, etc.</i></p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p><i>Ex. RN experience gap, potential burnout of current nurses, etc.</i></p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p><i>Ex. Outsourcing staffing, telemedicine, etc.</i></p>	<p>Threats</p> <p><i>Ex. Retiring nurses, lack of grad pipeline as a result of COVID-19, nurses leaving bedside, etc.</i></p>

Common staffing challenges

In 2020, chief nursing officers and healthcare executives are facing a plethora of obstacles in RN staffing. **How many of these are you currently facing?**

Mark the ones you are currently facing below. You will find helpful resources to these challenges on our blog at avanthealthcare.com/blog.

- ☐ Retention and recruitment
- ☐ RN experience and skills gap
- ☐ Leader turnover and succession planning
- ☐ Increases in workplace violence and aggression
- ☐ Leadership development (or lack thereof)
- ☐ Nurse resilience and burnout
- ☐ New grad engagement
- ☐ Organizational alignment
- ☐ Managing nurse staffing ratios
- ☐ Culture leadership and satisfaction
- ☐ Concerns surrounding nurse mental health
- ☐ Keeping nurses at the bedside
- ☐ Promoting patient satisfaction
- ☐ Promoting diversity and inclusion



What types of nurses do you have on staff?

Facilities across the U.S. are changing their tactics to alleviate critical staffing challenges, with more relying on staffing agencies to fill those needs. U.S. hospital leaders feeling the brunt of the shortage will need to develop a comprehensive approach to healthcare staffing as they plan for the future.

In the table below, identify your nurses and write in pros and cons for each to help you solidify your staffing strategy. Read more on the different types of placements, along with benefits and drawbacks [here](https://avanthealthcare.com/blog/nurse-staffing-agency.shtml) (avanthealthcare.com/blog/nurse-staffing-agency.shtml).

	Pros	Cons
Travel Nurses	Ex. Staffing flexibility	Ex. Cost of labor
Per Diem		
Perm Placement		Ex. Lack of retention, excessive fees, etc.
New Grads		
Other: _____		

More hospitals are using staffing agencies in 2020

According to Avant Healthcare Professionals' 2020 Trends in Nurse Staffing Study, more hospitals are planning on using staffing agencies this year to bridge the experience gap. Nurse staffing agencies provide nurse placements to hospitals that have trouble filling temporary or permanent placements. Established staffing agencies streamline the staffing process for healthcare professionals and hospitals alike, with some agencies providing additional services such as housing, education programs, ongoing support, etc. It's critical to understand all the benefits you will receive when choosing to partner with an agency. The services a staffing firm will have will depend on the types of healthcare professionals they place.

International Nurse Staffing

The employment of international nurses has become increasingly popular in the past decade to balance the nurse supply and demand. International nurses are recruited through agencies like Avant Healthcare Professionals to work in the U.S. International nurses work on a contract (for the agency) at the client's facility until they convert to their full-time staff. These contracts typically last three years.

The advantages of international nurse staffing are that the rates can be significantly less than travel, add stability to high turnover units, reduce burnout, and eventually transition the nurse to your full-time core staff.

Internationally-experienced nurses also impact the neighborhood they are placed in by diversifying the community and positively impacting the local economy.



Programs to consider post-COVID-19

Nurse leaders may want to consider incorporating multifaceted resilience training post-COVID-19, especially for those in critical care units. Nurses working in intensive care units generally experience higher rates of mortality and may require ways to best cope with stressors associated with death and grief. Implementing psychological resilience training to promote positive psychological factors is a must to improve burnout in units.

Are you looking to add more programs or educational resources for your staff post-COVID-19? Mark the ones you have implemented or are looking to implement in the future.



- ☐ Nurse resiliency training
- ☐ Nurse cross-training
- ☐ Mental health resources / workshops
- ☐ Nurse leadership development program
- ☐ Crisis intervention training
- ☐ Diversity & inclusion training
- ☐ Nurse recognition programs
- ☐ Improved nurse feedback model
- ☐ New grad program
- ☐ Compassion care
- ☐ Swing bed plan / capacity management
- ☐ Crisis child care plan (for RNs)
- ☐ _____

Define your recruitment strategy

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, recruiting and retaining skilled nurses was an ongoing struggle for hospitals across the nation. With more than [500,000](#) projected nurses retiring by 2022, nurse leaders may need to consider a multi-faceted approach to staffing to ensure patient safety during the national nursing shortage.

What strategies will you use to recruit new talent to your team? Mark which tactics you have tried or are planning to try.

- ☐ Sign-on bonuses
- ☐ Tuition assistance / reimbursement
- ☐ Academic partnerships
- ☐ Student loan assistance
- ☐ Marketing collateral
- ☐ Recruiting international nurses
- ☐ Internal recruitment efforts
- ☐ Improve pay packages
- ☐ External advertising
- ☐ Staffing agencies
- ☐ Attract new grads
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



Contact our team to overcome your staffing challenges



Shari Dingle Costantini

Founder and CEO, Avant Healthcare Professionals
scostantini@avanthealthcare.com
407.681.1302



Brian Hudson

Senior Vice President, Avant Healthcare Professionals
bhudson@avanthealthcare.com
407.478.0212



About Avant Healthcare Professionals

Avant Healthcare Professionals is the premier staffing specialist for internationally educated registered nurses, physical therapists and occupational therapists. Avant has placed thousands of international healthcare professionals across U.S. facilities to help improve the continuity of their care, fill hard-to-find specialties, and increase patient satisfaction, revenue and HCAHPS scores. Avant is a Joint Commission accredited staffing agency and founding member of the American Association of International Healthcare Recruitment (AAIHR). Avant Healthcare Professionals is a member of the Jackson Healthcare® family of companies.