PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT
AMID COVID-19

This research is brought to you by the Association for Advancing Physician and Provider Recruitment (AAPPR) in partnership with Elsevier.

Over three months after the United States began restricting movement to flatten the curve of COVID-19, in-house physician recruitment teams are still innovating and adapting to a new form of recruitment and hiring. AAPPR recently queried its members through both an online survey and personal interviews to hear directly from them on what had changed in their profession. Results are based on responses from 273 internal recruiters, received June 4–15, 2020.

The data shows a tale of two roads diverging: those who stopped and those who kept recruiting. The impact of those two differing paths remains to be seen. AAPPR surveyed its members in June 2020 and conducted qualitative interviews that examine members’ experiences. Interviews were done with members from large and small organizations and from coast to coast. In every member interaction today, AAPPR hears stories of adaptability and resilience. Some don’t wait to be redeployed; they become leaders and share their transferable expertise. Mentoring has grown, especially with or by those who have been furloughed. This has been a time to reflect and invest in oneself. The stories our members have shared with us are truly inspiring.

Study Highlights

- Most everyone is working from home, and many expect to be working from home indefinitely. Teams have adapted to being fully remote. Communication norms are changing, and they realize that they may have to work harder to keep up comradery and reduce isolation. Many report their work production is also better.
- The balance between work and personal life remains a challenge. Whether your work and home location are the same or your team has been furloughed, work demands either remain the same or greater because of furloughed team members. For some, the absence of travel has created a calmer, more measured pace of work.
- Candidate site visits slowed but didn’t stop entirely for everyone. Several factors are often at play when considering site visits:
  - How critical is the hire?
  - How insistent is the candidate on doing a site visit?
  - Where is the physician/candidate coming from, and is quarantine a consideration when the candidate returns home?
- Some members have seen increases in the physician candidate pool or, at a minimum, a more responsive candidate pool.
  - “Many physicians took the opportunity to reassess their current situation. Some were thinking about a change for a long time, and now might be a time to make a change.”

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– “Some physicians who have been
furloughed or have received a cut in
pay don’t think their job will ever go
back to where it was.”

– “A number of physicians are expe-
rincing increased burnout as a result
of the pandemic, and we’re working
on a better response and support, but
we know they are reassessing their
practice and location as a result.”

• Many agreed that recruitment is a
long-term strategy. It can take at least
6–9 months until a new physician
starts seeing patients. Organizations
that are poised to recover are not
pulling back.

– “I have a progressive C-suite who
understands you can’t stop recruiting
because you’ll get behind the ball.”

• Virtual interviewing is a must for most
organizations, and while recruiters and
interview teams are still learning the
best platforms and approaches, many
are finding success. In some cases,
recruiters can be more consultative
to interview teams, able to coach or
provide guidance by sometimes being
a witness to more interviews.

• Most budgets were cut naturally by
the inability to travel. Members expect
more cuts for the next fiscal year due
to the same.

– “We’re looking at cutting nonessen-
tial budget items. Anything that isn’t
already committed or encumbered,
we’re going to be asked to cut by
70–80% (travel and things we can
easily get rid of first). We don’t know
what that means yet. Maybe it means
not filling vacant positions.”

• Delays:

– “Our onboarding and start dates have
changed or been delayed.”

– “Advanced practice providers have
been impacted as well (lack of
preceptors).”

– “Residents and fellows are impacted,
and it’s been a challenge to determine
where people should go.”

– “We had to delay the openings of
clinics as well.”

– “Until the patient volumes come
back or unless there is a critical need,
we expect the demand for locums to
be less.”

• People and organizations are
worried about and are planning for
the resurgence of COVID but are also
cautiously optimistic.

– “I’m not expecting anything ‘normal’
for a year or two. We are preparing for
this to be our structure. I think we’re
going to be okay.”

Peer Advice

• “Ensure that you’re vocal enough to
get the tools you need to effectively do
your job from wherever you may be.”

• “Make yourself invaluable.”

• “Keep working hard.”

• “Explain to leadership that this is the
time to be out there actively recruiting
and interviewing.”

• “Overcommunicate with physician
candidates and go above and beyond
to engage them where they feel like
they know you and the organization,
so they either wait for when it’s safe to
travel or sign for the job.”

• “Stay networked with other recruit-
ment teams, know what they’re learn-
ing, and get an education online.”

• If an organization has stopped
recruiting?

– Look at your medical staff planning
and onboarding procedures.

– Double-check and audit of
your systems.

– Clean out your candidate pools.

– Strengthen your residency program
relationships.

– Work on your succession planning for
the next 3–5 years.

– “I’ve learned to be patient through this
and to give people some grace right
now. It’s not always easy to do it, but
it’s necessary.”
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Telehealth Search Option on NEJM CareerCenter

To improve the candidate experience and offer our advertisers more specificity to their ads, we now include a telehealth advanced search option for jobseekers. Physicians will now be able to refine their job search results using the telehealth filter option.

Employers have the option to select “Yes” or “No” for telehealth when posting jobs through the site. The category is optional but will help connect you with the right jobseekers.

From the AAPPR Member Survey:

Recruitment Efforts Paused?

Yes 38%
No 62%

28% of organizations reduced recruitment departments’ staff via furloughs, layoffs and terminations

Organization has Paused Recruitment Efforts

Largest Organizations 47%
Mid-sized Organizations 43%
Smallest Organizations 23%

Organization has Reduced Staff via furloughs, layoffs & terminations

35% Largest Organizations
27% Mid-sized Organizations
21% Smallest Organizations
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DEADLINE DATE: October 23, 2020
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