

**Healthcare Workforce Development Division**

400 R Street, Suite 330
Sacramento, California 95811-6213
(916) 326-3700
Fax (916) 322-2588
www.oshpd.ca.gov

Locum Tenens Overview and ResourcesBackground

Locum tenens is a Latin term that means “to hold the place of, to substitute for” and is used to indicate when a medical provider temporarily takes the place of another provider, in a facility that is not his/her own. Locum tenens providers are used for various reasons including: covering for a provider attending continuing medical education courses; filling in for an absent staff member who may be on vacation, sabbatical, maternity leave or ill; supplementing work during busy times; and staffing positions temporarily while a facility recruits full-time providers. Locum tenens work is mostly needed for primary care and in rural and underserved areas where there is a lack of providers and facilities cannot accommodate vacancies. Locum tenens assignments vary from clinics to hospitals and can last from just a few days, weeks to months. Locum tenens providers are sometimes matched with facilities or organizations through locum tenens agencies who serve as matchmakers. In other cases, the facilities independently seek out locum tenens providers. Under California law (Business and Professions Code 2418), locum tenens agencies cannot serve as employers but only intermediaries. The locum tenens provider signs a contract directly with the facility or healthcare organization which defines the length of service, rate of pay, service obligations, and many times travel and lodging accommodations.

The Need for Locum Tenens Providers in California

There is a great need for locum tenens providers in California. A 2012 survey of locum tenens staffing agencies indicated that California is one of the 10 states with highest need for locum tenens providers. In California, 48 of the 58 counties have at least one primary care health profession shortage area designation and 44 of the 58 counties are rural which tend to have the greatest need for providers and cannot accommodate provider vacancies. Many providers in rural and underserved areas are stressed and get burned out due high patient workload and the lack of vacation and family time. Many of these providers also have difficulty finding time to take continuing education courses or attend professional conferences. This rough lifestyle motivates many providers to abandon rural and underserved areas which exacerbate provider shortages in those areas. Locum tenens helps with provider retention as it allows providers in rural and underserved areas to take time off for needed activities as other providers are able to cover in their absence.

Many of California’s current providers are nearing retirement age. For example, almost 30 percent of California’s physicians are older than 60 which is the largest proportion of any state. While this is a challenge because it is going to exacerbate our current workforce shortages it also creates an opportunity as those providers at retirement age instead of fully retiring, can take on a locum tenens provider role and only work a few months of the year. This allows these

providers to continue working at some capacity while not having to work full-time and stress over managing their own practice. This role is critical because it will help relieve the other providers who need to take time off for various reasons and at the same time help providers that are not ready to fully retire.

There are primary care shortages in many areas throughout California in part because many early career providers coming out of health professions school are uncertain of making commitments to practice in rural and underserved areas as they don't know if that is the lifestyle they want. Locum tenens serves as a way to recruit providers into rural and underserved areas as it gives them the short term opportunity to experience practicing in such areas for a couple months. This allows them time to decide if they like practicing in those areas and would want to commit to practice in those areas for a few years. There are many incentives through scholarship and loan repayment programs if they do commit to practice in those areas and local tenens allows them the opportunity to see if it is the right fit for them. At the same time they are covering for a provider in the interim while earning great pay that allows them to start paying off student debt.

Locum tenens is a great short term solution that would help address provider absence/vacancies and burnout but in the long-term California needs to implement policies to expand our health workforce infrastructure and address shortages in all regions throughout California. Addressing health workforce shortages would allow providers to take needed time off without having to worry about their service area not having providers to deliver needed care.

Benefits of Being a Locum Tenens Provider

There are many benefits to being a locum tenens provider. Early career providers coming out of health professions school may be contemplating on different practice locations. There are many scholarship and loan repayment programs for providers that go into rural and underserved areas but many providers may be unsure if they want to commit to those areas for a couple years since they have not experienced that type of lifestyle. Locum tenens work allows these providers to experience working in rural and underserved areas for a couple months before making a full commitment. Many locum tenens jobs offer great pay so it allows them to earn money in the interim and start paying off student debt while they are deciding where they want to pursue full-time employment.

Some providers are nearing retirement age or may be at retirement age and do not want to work full-time and stress over managing their own practice but are not ready to fully retire and stop practicing. Locum tenens work allows these providers to semi-retire and continue to work for only a few months of the year while continuing to receive pay. For both types of providers locum tenens allows them to experience practicing and carrying for individuals throughout different regions in California which provides great experience and opportunity to meet different patients, learn about different cultures, see how practices are organized, and broaden the provider's skills.

Locum Tenens Resources

National Association of Locum Tenens Organizations- Locum Tenens Education Center
<http://www.nalto.org/about-locum-tenens/locum-tenens-education/archive.php>

A Physician's Guide to Working as a Locum Tenens
Mary M. Maniscalco, MD
<http://www.jabfm.org/content/16/3/242.full.pdf+html>

A Physician's Guide to Locum Tenens
William T. Cushing, MD, MBA
<http://www.aafp.org/fpm/1999/0200/p41.html>

Indian Health Services
http://www.ihs.gov/physicians/index.cfm?module=request_tdy

Department of Veteran Affairs
<http://www.va.gov/PrimaryCare/lt/credentials.asp>

California Business and Professions Code Section 2418- Locum Tenens
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=bpc&group=02001-03000&file=2418>

Locum Tenens Staffing Companies

Comp Health
<http://www.comphealth.com/locum-tenens/resources/>

Global Medical Staffing
<http://www.gmedical.com/us>

Locums Tenens.com
<http://www.locumtenens.com/>

Physicians Employment
<http://www.physemp.com/>

Soliant Health
<http://www.soliant.com/physicians/locum-tenens/>

Staff Care
<http://www.staffcare.com/>

Vista Staff
<http://www.vistastaff.com/physicians/us-locum-tenens/locumtenens>