

Introduction

Welcome to a rewarding career that will provide you with many years of professional satisfaction. Historically the early PNPs were pioneers in carving out niches in a new frontier, as they convinced health care professionals and families of their worth. Throughout the subsequent decades, PNPs expanded their role, as they overcame many obstacles. The PNP role continues to grow and evolve in new directions. Many studies have noted that PNPs provide quality health care and are cost effective. Although PNPs are discussed throughout, this guide may be useful to NPs in all specialty areas and who work in a variety of practice settings. This new and revised career resource may be helpful for NPs who are new graduates, those who are changing their field of work or practice setting, those who are re-locating, and for those who are experiencing job loss.

For those of you just entering the NP field - Welcome to a rewarding field with more opportunities than you may have been led to believe. You can and will find a good position, but it will also require effort. Make sure to read "Guidelines for New PNP Graduate Job Seekers", which can be found in Appendix A of this guide. For those of you dealing with the loss of a position - job loss can bring on several emotions. You may be angry, sad, or perhaps embarrassed. You may even be fearful that you will never find another position. Take heart and trust us that you will find another job. But, to do so will require effort. This NP Career Resource Guide will assist you in your search.

This guide has been developed for NPs everywhere who are looking for a job or to better their career. It provides helpful hints that range from how to search for the right job for you, conducting your job campaign including how to apply for jobs, interviewing techniques and follow-up, as well as contract negotiations and other helpful information once you get the job you are looking for. Included in the guide are examples of helpful tools such as a resume, cover letter, performance appraisals and templates of sample employment contracts.

Several NAPNAP members provided guidelines and tips to help NPs in situations such as establishing a presence in primary practice (See Appendix B), establishing an entrepreneurial practice (See Appendix C), reimbursement issues for NPs (See Appendix D), and things to know about credentialing and privileging as an NP (See Appendix E).

The *NAPNAP Nurse Practitioner Career Resource Guide* is designed, not only to help you find a job, but to find a professional position that fits your background and career expectations. It contains the necessary tools and strategic steps for a successful job search campaign. The intent is to provide a businesslike approach to finding a new position, whether you are job searching as a result of a job loss; looking for that first job; or simply looking to explore new career opportunities.

To be an NP or not to be an NP?

In a recent national survey, many of America's workers said they would choose a different career, if they had the option. Would you choose to continue to be an NP? You may choose to evaluate if your current career or position is right for you. If not, your next task is to pursue another career or position, which may require additional education

Whether you continue your NP career where you are, or take a new direction, you will need to understand the job market. Identifying key issues related to the profession and understanding general business and health care policy trends can help you make a good decision.

Explore your options

Regardless of why you are looking for a job or a new position, you'll want to thoroughly explore your options prior to beginning your search. Usually, people seek a similar job in a similar organization to what they left because it's a familiar situation to them. However, you may have more options than you think. Nurse Practitioners can choose to work in, among other places, primary care practices, hospitals, schools, specialty practices, Health Maintenance organizations (HMOs), industry, or as consultants in the legal and computer fields. Of course, the skills you have acquired as an NP can also be applied to a number of other fields. Your abilities to problem-solve, provide anticipatory guidance, and teach are transferable to a variety of other types of positions.

Setting goals

If you feel that you want to make a career change, but you can't afford to do it right now, a good strategy is to have short-term and long-term goals. In the short-term, you must find a way to pay the bills, which will enable you to focus any available time on your long-term goal of finding your ideal job. Take advantage of periods of inactivity during your job search, to work on your long-term plan. **Warning:** Don't let yourself become overwhelmed by the process. Break the long-term goal down into implementation steps that will make it "doable." And, don't be afraid to ask for help. There are many resources available to you that you may not have considered, such as:

- Local college counseling offices may be willing to provide advice and assistance;
- The Internet is loaded with career-related Web-sites, such as www.npjobs.com, www.npworld.us, and www.careers.org;
- Local libraries and book stores are great sources of career information;
- Your State Job Service and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation can also be helpful;
- Search your local phone book under the Guide to Human Services. Other public agencies that offer help also are listed;

- Research employment trends that may influence job opportunities, such as geographic population shifts and industrial and occupational projections.

Continuing your education and training

If you decide that you want to continue your education, or to try using your knowledge and skills in a different setting, consider the following questions:

1. Do you want to go back to school or develop new skills while you're working? If so, one of your job search objectives should be to find an employer who supports continuing education.
2. Can you afford to attend a full-time education program? Financial assistance may be available through industry and government-sponsored programs, scholarships, and loans. Talk to professionals who are versed in these issues, such as guidance counselors and academic advisors.

The right job may not be much harder to find than the wrong job.

The search for the right job

Someone who is unemployed might be tempted to accept any job. However, the first position that becomes available may not be the right position. The longer you are unemployed, the more likely you are to feel that a "job is a job." Some nurse practitioners have taken staff nurse positions because they feel they have to do something. However, do you want to spend eight hours a day doing something just because it pays the bills? Or, do you want to find a position that fits your skills and provides more than monetary rewards? Since you plan to look anyway, focus on finding a position you believe you will be happy to stay in. Short-term positions might pay some bills, but they may not enhance your resume. Before you settle for an offer, consider:

- What are the physicians' and other staff's perceptions of PNPs?

- What are the physicians' and other staff's credentials?
- The right job might be in a different city, or involve a longer commute.
- The right job may not be much harder to find than the wrong job.
- You are more likely to be motivated when looking for the right job.
- By focusing on your interests, you will be more persuasive in convincing an employer to hire you.
- Getting the right job will motivate you to work harder to succeed.
- Short-term sacrifices often pay off in long-term satisfaction.

Usually, finding a job while you're unemployed becomes your full-time job. But, there are ways to find opportunities even while you're working. It is not the end of your career as a NP if you need to accept a position that's less than your dream job. Consider working in a locum tenens position (temporary replacement position) and make the most of the networking contacts you encounter in this position. Interim jobs may be stepping-stones to your ideal position.

Resumes, Cover Letters, Applications, and References

Resumes

Your first impression on your potential new employer comes from your resume and that first impression largely determines whether or not you get interviewed for a job. Below are some suggestions on how to develop an effective resume to market your accomplishments, experiences and skills. See Appendix F at the back of this guide for an example of a resume.

Building a successful resume involves the following:

- **Research:** Developing a self-inventory of items to include
- **Development:** Writing the first draft
- **Design:** Editing the resume to fit a desired format

On-line Resumes

Employers and job seekers alike often use the Internet to fill or find positions. So, you should consider developing an electronic or e-resume in addition to a traditional resume. In creating your e-resume, follow the basic rules for building a successful resume as outlined above, but place your emphasis on choosing the *keywords* employers look for in resumes posted on-line, or when scanning potential candidates' resumes into a database. Make a listing of keywords the first item in your on-line resume, following your contact information. Like traditional resumes, e-resumes should be a concise, detailed account of your accomplishments, experiences and skills, but don't be shy about listing as many keywords as you think apply. Keep the rest of the e-resume brief. A sample resume can be found at www.resume.com.

Most on-line employment web-sites offer forms or software programs to aid you in developing an on-line resume, but you may want to develop a resume document of your own that you can forward via e-mail to potential employers.

Traditional Resumes

For professionals, a resume not only documents your accomplishments, experiences and skills; it will speak for you when you cannot be there to speak for yourself. Some ways you can use a resume:

- Share it with your professional contacts and people who can help you find job leads.
- Provide it to your references to assist them in giving accurate information about you.
- Send it to human resources departments of potential employers.
- Submit it when you answer classified ads.

Career tip: Your resume must attract attention, create interest, and achieve the ultimate objective - get you an interview.