

Adjusting Employment Policies for NJ Healthcare Facilities in Light of EO 332

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At the height of the COVID pandemic, the use of travel nurses became increasingly popular at healthcare facilities, including nursing homes and assisted-living facilities. Employed by staffing agencies rather than the facility itself, travel nurses were earning up to \$10,000 per week during the pandemic compared to the typical weekly earnings of \$1,800-\$2,300 for a full time nurse employed at a facility in New Jersey.

EO 332 Brings Healthcare Employers Relief and New Recruiting Opportunities

From an employment perspective, it was a welcome relief for New Jersey's healthcare facilities when President Biden declared the end of the COVID emergency in May 2023, and New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy ended the COVID vaccine mandate for healthcare facilities with [Executive Order 332](#) (EO 332) effective June 12. No longer bound by the vaccine mandate, employers were suddenly in a position to recruit new staff, expand the pool of qualified and eligible candidates, and even encourage the return of nurses who had left to pursue greater income as travel nurses at the height of the pandemic.

EO 332 opened the door for employers to alleviate the impact of the nursing staff shortage and seek out talent to join their teams. With that opening came a need to modify policies and job descriptions that were created prior to June 12. In addition, the post-COVID workforce has new values and demands, which require employers to rethink what a position offers a prospective employee.

Attracting Nursing Talent Back In-House to Healthcare Facilities

What are employees looking for now? The pandemic workforce saw firsthand a need for flexibility, allowances, financial support, and a healthy and safe work environment. Employers therefore are advised to review existing [policies](#) and job descriptions and evaluate potential changes, including:

- Adding flexibility with scheduling work hours
- Maintaining the nurse to patient ratio
- Automating tasks to allow nursing staff to focus on critical patient care
- Increasing support for nursing staff by hiring at more levels
- Offering tuition assistance for professional development
- Providing options for housing and childcare allowances

The operational costs for embarking on a new recruitment strategy may be higher in the short term, as employers need to consider if and how they can meet the requirements prospective employees now expect in a workplace. On the other hand, the nursing shortage required facilities to pay overtime to their smaller staff count. By recruiting effectively, a facility can meet patient demand safely and efficiently, and thereby reduce the need for overtime hours and the associated overtime costs.

Learn More

To learn more about how your healthcare facility can modify policies and procedures in order to move forward, improve nursing staff levels and reduce operational costs post-COVID, please contact Partner [Andrew Berns](#).