

# Advanced Practitioners

Recruiting and Attracting In-Demand Clinical Talent



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As America's demographic and healthcare needs change and the shortage of physicians continues to escalate, advanced practitioners (APs) — nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs) — are augmenting physician capacity and providing patients with efficient, cost-effective care.

*U.S. News & World Report* ranked PAs and NPs among the Top 10 Best Jobs of 2018. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the number of open advanced practice positions will rise by more than 30 percent in the next decade, making it a highly competitive recruitment market for healthcare employers.

### Hard-to-Fill Advanced Practitioner Roles

In all markets, but especially in smaller and rural markets where the provider shortage is acute, advanced practitioners are playing a critical role in ensuring access to patient care. A 2017 survey of primary care physician residents by Cejka Search reported that only eight percent were interested in working in a rural community. By contrast, Cejka Search advanced practice survey showed that 24 percent of this group was interested in practicing in rural and smaller communities.

"We are seeing more advanced practitioners being hired in small to medium-sized communities," said Cejka Vice President Cecilia Beard, "but we're also seeing healthcare employers offering more incentives to attract and retain them."

In these smaller markets, advanced practitioners are expected to work fairly independently. In some cases, there may only be one supervising physician and she/he may not be onsite daily. In these scenarios, advanced practitioners are using their solid clinical skills to conduct patient visits, make patient calls, and write prescriptions. With that level of responsibility, they may be better compensated here than they would be in a larger community.

Even in larger markets, hiring a nurse practitioner or physician assistant as a solo practitioner or two-physician medical group can be difficult. In these settings, advanced practitioners may assume they will be handling all of the cases the physicians don't want and not contributing in a meaningful way.

### The Keys to Attracting Top Advanced Practitioners

Today's challenging recruitment market means healthcare employers need to offer more than just attractive positions. They need to understand what's most important to advanced practitioner candidates — autonomy, total compensation, a collaborative work environment — and then find ways to meet their needs.

The single most common inquiry among nurse practitioners and physician assistants, according to Cejka's recruiting experts, is the level of autonomy a specific employment opportunity offers.

"Advanced practitioners want to know the ratio of doctors to APs," said Beard. "They expect clinical supervision but want assurance that they will have some autonomy over how they manage their administrative duties. They do not want to be micro-managed."

When it comes to compensation, benefits and incentives, today's advanced practitioners share expectations similar to those of primary care physicians, according to Cejka's research. For example, call pay, signing bonuses, four-day work weeks, and production incentives are ranked as highly important by both groups. Benefits most important to advanced practitioners are those that offer guaranteed value, such as CME time and reimbursement, vacation time and 401(k) retirement plans. This compares with physicians, who prioritize profit sharing over other benefits.

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### The Keys to Attracting Top Advanced Practitioners, cont'd.

Whether it is a single-specialty group, hospital, or health system, advanced practitioners prefer a collaborative, multi-disciplinary care team model where they are treated as partners, not direct reports, and can interact with various levels of clinical care.

“In our experience, organizations that offer a collaborative work environment and a care team model are the most attractive to advanced practitioners,” Beard said. “This approach is also an effective way to differentiate your healthcare organization as an employer of choice.”

For example, Cejka Search recently recruited leading advanced practitioners for a highly attractive employer, a neonatologist academic center. The center is led by a medical director and staffed by 16 physicians, ten advanced practitioners, and multiple pediatric sub-specialists and surgeons — all working together as an integrated care team.

## ■ Tip: Create a Red Carpet Candidate Experience

When it comes to in-demand clinical talent, employers are “competing” to secure their first choice for new hires. That’s why it is so important to leverage on-site candidate visits. Be sure to create an impactful “red carpet” experience, before, during and after the visit.

- 1. Make a memorable first impression.** Arrange transportation from the airport, and have a knowledgeable representative greet and guide the candidate for the day.
- 2. Learn the candidate’s needs and interests in advance.** Data shows that candidates are more likely to accept positions that are close to family, where they have personal ties, or in a community that fits their lifestyle. Customize the experience by gathering information about the candidate’s personal expectations in advance.
- 3. Include time with peers.** Candidates often find that their most valuable insight into a potential employer or position comes through time spent with peers. Carve out time for peer discussion, ideally among those who share similar backgrounds or experiences.
- 4. Clarify the role and topics of the interview.** Take care to brief all interviewers on the candidate’s profile, background and interests. Clarify any further information to be gathered from the candidate by each interviewer and communicate the visit agenda in advance.
- 5. Provide prompt, clear follow-up.** Assign a representative to follow through on any additional phone interviews or provide information that was requested during the visit.

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### RESULTS OF 2018 ADVANCED PRACTITIONER SURVEY OF 2,908 PROFESSIONALS

MEDICAL SPECIALTY PREFERRED BY ADVANCED PRACTITIONERS			
Allergy and immunology	34.92%	Internal Medicine and/or Subspecialties	7.15%
Anesthesiology	27.84%	Internal Medicine/Pediatrics	6.80%
Colon and rectal surgery	19.28%	Medical Genetics	6.66%
Dermatology	19.28%	Neurological Surgery	6.52%
Emergency medicine	10.03%	Neurology	4.98%
Family medicine	7.99%	Nuclear Medicine	4.91%

INCENTIVES MAKING A PRACTICE OPPORTUNITY ATTRACTIVE	
Call pay	69.08%
4-day work week/12-hour shifts	56.26%
Production incentive	51.39%
Signing bonus paid at signing	47.96%
Signing bonus paid on start date	47.40%

ADVANCED PRACTITIONER SIGN-ON BONUS EXPECTATIONS					
\$0-\$5,999	\$6,000-\$10,999	\$11,000-\$15,999	\$16,000-\$20,999	\$21,000-\$24,999	\$25,000+
23.92%	39.74%	14.65%	9.73%	3.40%	8.56%

STATES MOST AND LEAST PREFERRED AS PRACTICE LOCATIONS			
MOST PREFERRED		LEAST PREFERRED	
Florida	23.63%	West Virginia	3.09%
Texas	19.83%	Minnesota	2.88%
California	18.71%	Rhode Island	2.60%
North Carolina	16.32%	Kansas	2.46%
Colorado	15.82%	Mississippi	2.39%
Arizona	13.08%	Oklahoma	2.39%
Tennessee	12.03%	North Dakota	1.90%
Georgia	11.95%	Arkansas	1.83%
Washington	11.39%	Nebraska	1.83%
New York	10.41%	South Dakota	1.76%
Oregon	10.34%		
South Carolina	10.27%		

PRIMARY REASONS TO CHOOSE AN ADVANCED PRACTITIONER JOB LOCATION	
Proximity to family	69.41%
Relocation/lifestyle	45.88%
Personal ties	35.65%

Sources:  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook: Physicians Assistants, Nurse Practitioners*  
 StarMed, *2018 Advanced Practitioner Survey*  
 U.S. News & World Report, March 2, 2018 — Joyce Knestrick quote  
 Aberdeen Group, *Hiring Tomorrow's Workforce Today: The Talent Pipeline*, January 2018  
 Aberdeen Group, *Strengthening Employee Engagement Across the Employment Lifecycle*, June, 2017  
 Cejka Search Report, August 4, 2017, found on cejkasearch.com

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### Advanced Practitioner Recruiting Tips: Get Innovative and Flexible

When the candidate pool is tight, healthcare organizations may need to get creative. The Aberdeen Group reports that 40 percent of companies are unable to hire one of their top three candidates more than half the time and that a stunning 87 percent of new employees aren't fully committed to their new job for the first six months. You can mitigate these problems with recruiting tactics and job features that address the needs of today's advanced practitioner.

1. There is high demand for hands-on training and clinical experience among advanced practitioners, especially those that allow them to transition to sub-specialties. Offering clinical training is a great way to attract talent while providing career pathways to sub-specialty roles helps boost retention.
2. Give advanced practitioners a voice in how care delivery can be improved. Include them with physicians and other team members on committees focused on quality outcomes, technology enhancements and integrated care.
3. Offer leadership opportunities. Research from the American Academy of Physician Assistants shows that among those not in leadership roles, 36 percent were interested in attaining a level of leadership, with the most interest coming from those physician assistants whose experience was under five years. The study went on to report that only 20 percent felt there was upward mobility in their organizations, indicating a clear path for differentiating your healthcare organization from other potential employers.
4. Be sure your advanced practitioner positions deliver challenging, relevant work combined with rewards and recognition that demonstrate their value to the organization. It will differentiate you as an employer and improve retention and engagement, which is good for the bottom line.

### About Cejka Search

Cejka Search is a nationally recognized physician, healthcare executive, and advanced practice search firm providing services exclusively to the healthcare industry for more than 35 years. Cejka Search recruits top healthcare talent for organizations nationwide through our team of experienced professionals, award-winning recruitment technology and commitment to service excellence. Cejka Search is a Cross Country Healthcare, Inc. (Nasdaq: CCRN) company, a leading provider of healthcare staffing services in the United States. For more information, visit [cejkasearch.com](http://cejkasearch.com).