



# INNOVATION & FLEXIBILITY:

The Journey to Sustainable Healthcare

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## FINDING A PATH TO SUSTAINABLE CARE

The status quo is no longer tenable. Healthcare organizations face massive challenges with financial performance, staffing optimization, technology advances, increased competition and government regulation.

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Through innovation, healthcare providers are finding flexibility and improved access to care. These flexible solutions create a more sustainable model to provide quality care to patients and their communities.

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LocumTenens.com surveyed healthcare leaders from across the country to get a clearer view of the challenges in today's landscape and how facilities are removing impediments to patient care. We hope these learnings will spark ideas and provide guidance on a path forward.

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After all, we have a common bond and a singular focus—providing patients with the best care possible.

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**Chris Franklin**

President, LocumTenens.com

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## KEY FINDINGS



### Staffing Challenges

Leaders cite physician staffing as the biggest challenge they see in today's healthcare environment. Finding new solutions and models are critical to charting a sustainable future.



### Expansion of Telehealth

More facilities are utilizing telehealth than ever before. COVID-19 expedited this adoption, but over the coming year, most hospitals expect to expand their use of telehealth even further.



### Utilization of APPs

To accommodate physician staffing shortages, hospitals are turning to advanced practice professionals (APPs) to improve access to care and provide relief to beleaguered staff.

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## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, BURNOUT

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Staffing challenges have become the overriding concern for hospitals, as they struggle to find clinicians to meet the growing demand for care. More clinicians are needed to meet the growing demands of an aging population. Yet, the number of clinicians is not increasing fast enough to accommodate this need.

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Without doubt, COVID-19 had a negative impact on the mental health of clinicians, who often report burnout, leading to early retirement or pursuit of other ventures. With a physician shortage, there is more competition to recruit and retain talent.

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These issues highlight the biggest concerns hospitals face: Attracting talent, avoiding burnout and retaining talent. These three issues dominate the survey responses and shine a light on the state of the industry.

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## BIGGEST CONCERNS FOR HOSPITALS



### ATTRACTING TALENT

25.86%

### AVOIDING BURNOUT

20.69%

### RETAINING TALENT

19.4%

### CONTROLLING COSTS

15.2%

### IMPROVING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

9.48%

### SCHEDULING PROVIDERS

9.05%

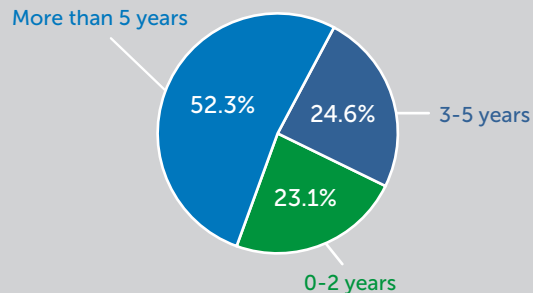
## MOVING BEYOND THE EXPECTED WITH LOCUMS STAFFING

The utilization of locum tenens staffing has increased over the years. While the data shows that many hospitals have been using temporary or outsourced physician staffing for more than five years, others are responding to the environment and increasing utilization of locums staffing for physicians.

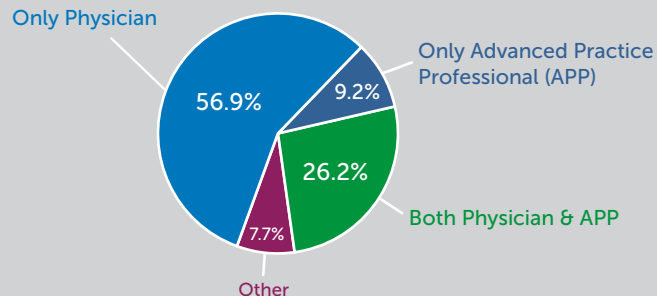
For those facilities not utilizing locum tenens staffing, the most common reasons cited were locum tenens coverage was either not applicable or was cost prohibitive. Others cited difficult credentialing processes or billing challenges. These are areas where significant investments are being made at the agency level to relieve burdens for facilities and clinicians.

With that, the majority of hospital leaders are open to locum tenens coverage. Just over 90% of facilities use locum tenens and nearly 57% of those who have not say they will consider using contingent staffing at their facility in the future.

## HOW LONG HAS YOUR FACILITY USED OUTSOURCED PHYSICIAN STAFFING?



## WHAT TYPES OF LOCUM TENENS CLINICIANS DOES YOUR FACILITY USE?



## THE NEW FACE OF LOCUMS WORK

Historically, locum tenens coverage has been focused solely on physician staffing, but with new stressors and challenges, the model for clinician staffing has changed. Hospitals are turning to advanced practice professionals (APPs) to improve access to care and alleviate scheduling issues.

There is a marked change in perception over the past few years that highlights the current economic situation in healthcare. When asked “What is the greatest benefit to using Advanced Practitioners (APPs) at your facility?” hospital administrators had a wide range of thoughts, most notably, numerous respondents pointed to lower cost and the benefits of supplementing staffing levels with qualified advanced practitioners.

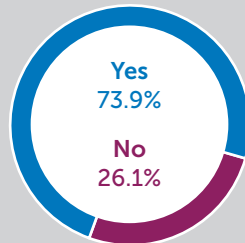


## EXPANDED UTILIZATION OF APPS ON THE HORIZON

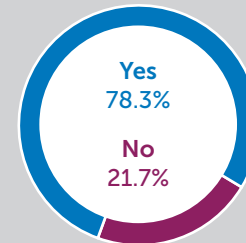
Advanced Practice Professionals (APPs) are an integral part of the care continuum. As we've noted, hospitals see the benefits of integrating APPs into the care model to improve access, lower costs and bring flexibility to staffing. This will lead to a greater utilization of APPs in the coming year, as hospital administrators plan to expand APP coverage.

From a patient perspective, there is little difference between an M.D. and APP providing care. We've often heard from patients that the letters behind a name don't matter. It's about the experience and quality of care. As a result, there is a push to allow APPs to practice to the top of their license. In some states, there are stringent requirements for M.D. supervision over APPs, but loosening those regulations could have a significant impact on the care delivery model, allowing facilities to expand utilization and increase the volume of patients seen.

### DO YOU PLAN TO EXPAND APP COVERAGE?



### DO APPS REQUIRE SUPERVISION FROM AN M.D./D.O. AT YOUR FACILITY?



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## ONSITE VS. TELEHEALTH: A BREAKDOWN OF LOCUMS WORK

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When most administrators consider locum tenens staffing, they most commonly think about onsite physician care. Data shows hospitals utilize onsite locum tenens staffing more than three times as often as telehealth.

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That is starting to change. Facilities that were previously reliant on onsite staffing are now embracing telehealth. COVID-19 expedited this adoption, as hospitals looked beyond traditional models to meet their patients' needs. In some cases, hospitals are taking a flexible, hybrid approach to staffing that integrates telehealth and onsite care, providing the best of both worlds and delivering value to patients.

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## IN WHAT CAPACITY DO YOU USE CONTINGENT LOCUM TENENS STAFFING?

ONSITE



Capacity	Relative Usage
ONSITE	High
TELEHEALTH	Low
PART-TIME COVERAGE	Medium-High
FULL-TIME COVERAGE	Medium

TELEHEALTH

PART-TIME COVERAGE

FULL-TIME COVERAGE

## EXPANDING TELEHEALTH: LOOKING BEYOND PSYCHIATRY

Telehealth is appropriate, and a successful approach to delivering care in the field of psychiatry. Traditionally, psychiatric services dominated locum tenens telehealth services, with behavioral health accounting for 79% of telehealth services for LocumTenens.com.

However, utilization has started to shift as hospitals look at other specialties, including oncology, cardiology and physiatry. By expanding telehealth offerings, facilities can expand access to care and reach more patients in new locations. Over the past year, many facilities have been able to deliver a higher level of specialty care to satellite or remote locations through telehealth.

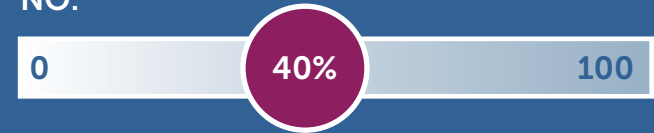
Going forward, better reconciling reimbursements to align with the level of care provided in a telehealth setting will lead to broader adoption.

## DO YOU PLAN TO EXPAND TELEHEALTH?

YES:



NO:





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## VALUE IN STAFFING: FLEXIBILITY & ACCESS WITH LOCUM TENENS

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Healthcare organizations have come to rely on locum tenens staffing to supplement existing staff. At the heart of locums staffing is the need to improve access to care for patients and provide a flexible solution for scheduling. With a comprehensive strategy that addresses immediate needs and looks to the future, hospitals can create a new level of value for the facility and patients.

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Locum tenens work is often saddled with negative perceptions in certain categories, most notably cost and patient experience, but when directly asked about these areas, hospital administrators had some surprising insights.

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Some respondents saw improvements in both areas—notably because they were able to treat patients onsite instead of transferring to a different facility. The vast majority saw no impact on patient satisfaction scores, which is an important distinction when hospitals are looking to maximize reimbursement rates. Additionally, most respondents saw no negative impact to team morale by integrating locum tenens clinicians.

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## USING LOCUM TENENS CLINICIANS HAS INCREASED:

### FLEXIBILITY WITH STAFFING

55.6%

### PATIENT ACCESS TO CARE

68.8%

### ABILITY TO FILL PREVIOUSLY UNFILLED POSITIONS

60.9%

## USING LOCUM TENENS CLINICIANS HAS NOT IMPACTED:

### PATIENT SATISFACTION SCORES

67.7%

### MORALE OF PERMANENT STAFF

47.7%

## CONCLUSION

Healthcare staffing leaders are looking for answers. The traditional models and solutions need to evolve. Through innovation, hospitals are finding flexibility and improved access to care that creates a more sustainable model and ultimately better care for patients.



A greater reliance on APPs to increase access to care



An increase in volume of telehealth services



Expansion of telehealth to new areas of practice



Integration of onsite and telehealth clinicians as part of a hybrid staffing strategy



A focus on sustainable staffing solutions that bring value and flexibility

These adaptations will be considered disruptors to the status quo, and are necessary to meet patients' needs going forward. Creating homegrown solutions will prove to be too much for many organizations, necessitating the need to find the right partner to bring a strategic approach, innovative solutions and a greater understanding of the current staffing environment. Sustainable staffing is on the horizon if healthcare organizations can adapt and see the opportunity ahead.

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## METHODOLOGY

This report was compiled utilizing data from an original survey conducted by LocumTenens.com. The 129 respondents to this survey represent a broad range of facility types and sizes. The data from the survey responses was compiled and analyzed by experts in the healthcare industry to formulate the insights within this report.

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## ABOUT LOCUMTENENS.COM

LocumTenens.com specializes in optimizing healthcare staffing strategies with flexible, hybrid and temporary placement of physicians, advanced practitioners and psychologists through both onsite and telehealth services. As operators of the locum tenens industry's most-visited job board, LocumTenens.com connects healthcare organizations with medical professionals to ensure patients have access to quality care. Founded in 1995, LocumTenens.com is a leader in the healthcare staffing industry, and an employer of choice placing clinicians who deliver care to more than seven million patients in over 2,400 healthcare facilities in the U.S. Headquartered in Atlanta, LocumTenens.com is a Jackson Healthcare® company. Learn more at [www.locumtenens.com](http://www.locumtenens.com).

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