



QUALITY BEST PRACTICES

NATHO members are leaders in the healthcare staffing industry and are dedicated to providing supplemental staffing to healthcare facilities throughout the United States by effectively recruiting, screening, and credentialing qualified healthcare professionals. NATHO member firms adhere to practice standards that comply with applicable laws and regulations, as well as Joint Commission standards for healthcare staffing companies, helping firms to provide high quality service. Ultimately, NATHO member firms contribute to quality patient care through delivery of highly competent credentialed staffing resources. The following quality standards are best practices utilized by NATHO member firms in screening and credentialing of travelers and other quality operations.

Traveler Screening & Credentialing

- 1. Employment Application** – Potential candidates complete a comprehensive employment application, or provide a resume, which requests detailed information, including education, training, licensure, and detailed work experience, as well as other pertinent qualifications and information. The candidates disclose certain issues pertaining to licensure, malpractice actions and attest that all information provided is true and correct.

Do: Attempt to allow travelers to provide profiles/resumes compiled using a 3rd party tool. Have a formal process to evaluate eligibility of any applicant who has disclosed prior licensure actions, malpractice history or criminal history during the application/credentialing process

Do: Conduct a formal clinical/risk assessment of any traveler, with a significant break of employment (>2 years), to include collaborating with your client to establish any special orientation/training needs prior to placing the traveler.

- 2. Clinical Skills Checklists** – Potential candidates complete an initial self-assessment skills checklist upon application that are based on the candidate's clinical specialty. The candidate attests the self-assessment information provided is true and correct.

Do: Assign skills checklist that align with the Traveler's primary specialty, work setting, and/or skill set. Travelers update their skills checklist as new skills are developed or changed.

Do: Utilize alternate tools or methods to evaluate competency when an appropriate checklist is not available matching the Traveler's primary specialty, work setting or skill.

- 3. Professional References** – Clinical, supervisory references verifying the candidate's clinical and interpersonal skills, and work experience. These references, when not obtained directly from the primary source, are contacted and validated by a representative of the staffing firm or qualified 3rd party reference tool or service.

Do: Obtain clinical references from recent related work experience, ideally within the last 3 years. Consider accepting written (verified) performance evaluations from prior employers. As an adjunct, obtain employment verification including dates and position matching the work history provided by the traveler. Have a standardized process in place to evaluate eligibility when negative references are obtained.

Do: Verify written references provided by the Traveler from within the last 5 years of employment, including the reference content and source.

Do: Take into consideration the client referencing requirements which may not require references

at the time of submittal or may accept employment verification in lieu of references.

4. **Criminal Background screening** – Criminal background screening is performed using a qualified 3rd party vendor prior to initial placement on all candidates and in accordance with state law (when applicable). The staffing firm has an adjudication process in place to evaluate any findings on a criminal background.

Do: Conduct repeat criminal screening after any break of employment, as defined by your company and when required by state mandate or contractually to do so.

Do: Follow the [FCRA \(Fair Credit Reporting Act\)](#) process prior to terminating a Traveler due to criminal background findings.

5. **Medicare/Medicaid Sanctions** – The staffing firm checks for federal sanctions from a query of the List of Excluded Individuals/Entities maintained by the [Office of Inspector General](#), [OFAC](#), and [SAM](#).

Do: Educate your recruitment and credentialing staff regarding the inability to place any individual that is found to be an excluded entity/individual with any facility that receives federal funding (i.e. funding from Medicare or Medicaid).

6. **Verification of State License/Registry** – Licenses and state registries are primary source verified. Disciplinary actions (limits or sanctions) are also part of the verification obtained from the state licensing board or registry. Actions or complaints against a candidate's license or registry may be a cause for exclusion from placement.

Do: Have formal guidelines and an adjudication process to review all prior disciplinary actions, including discipline imposed on licenses not required for the assignment. The evaluation should be conducted by an objective qualified party or review committee (i.e. not an individual who will directly financially benefit from the placement)

7. **Verification of State or Federally required Allied Credential or Certification** – Allied Health professions may require verification of credentials and/or certifications depending on the contract state (state in which they will be working or providing services)

Do: Since there is not one repository for all allied health professionals, refer to the national professional association and/or state health licensing website for state-by-state guidance on requirements.

8. **Verification of Compact Licensure** - Travelers claiming a compact license (RN, LPN, PT, OT & SLP) are required to provide proof of [eligibility for compact licensure](#) including proof of permanent residence matching the state of their compact license.

Do: Require proof of residency using documentation approved by [NCSBN standards](#) for nursing compact licensure or according to the specific professional compact commission.

Do: Educate your recruitment and credentialing staff regarding the inability to place a Traveler in a compact state using another state compact license if eligibility for compact licensure, including perm residency cannot be proven.

9. **Verification of Education** – Education and/or training associated with the candidate's profession is primary source verified with the applicable educational/training institution for those professionals that do not hold a state license or registration.

Do: Consider verifying both initial clinical degree as well as highest degree associated with the profession

Do: Conduct additional education verification to support/verify a copy of a diploma or school transcript

10. Health Screening and Immunization Requirements –

- a. Candidates undergo a physical exam according to client requirements and state law at the time of hire/first placement.
- b. In compliance with client requirements and/or state regulations, candidates may be required to provide proof of immunity. Most commonly these include: Rubeola, Rubella, Mumps, and Varicella (proof of positive titers or completion of required vaccinations) as well as TDap and COVID Vaccination. Additionally, the candidate must submit a Hepatitis B declination, Hepatitis B titer (proof of antibodies), or proof of Hepatitis B series.
- c. Screen candidates for Tuberculosis using either a PPD skin test or TB blood test performed at the time of hire and after any potential TB exposure.

Do: Follow [CDC guidance](#) on immunization for healthcare workers and [TB screening](#). Establish a formal accommodation process in compliance with [DOL guidelines](#) for medical or religious declinations by a Traveler for any immunization or required screening.

11. Drug Screen–Candidates submit to a urine drug test using a qualified 3rd party vendor, prior to initial placement (clients may require an additional drug screen as a condition to work at the facility).

Do: Follow any state specific laws with regards to restrictions on the testing of certain substances such as marijuana. Utilize an MRO to review any positive findings on a drug screen and allow the MRO to complete their adjudication process without your aid or interference.

Do: Educate the Traveler to respond promptly to MRO requests for information regarding their prescriptions and prescribing provider information.

12. Competency Screening – Validated*competency screening exams may be utilized to assess the candidate’s knowledge, skills, ability, and qualification in his/her specialty depending on, and appropriate to, the discipline of the healthcare professional.

Do: Use validated competency exams that are applicable to the Travelers primary specialty, work setting or skill set.

Do: Use competency exams as a tool to assess a new skill or specialty.

13. Annual Training - The candidates demonstrate knowledge annually in Joint Commission and OSHA required topics such as National Patient Safety Goals, infection control, cultural diversity, patient rights, ethics, sentinel event reporting protocols, HIPAA, fire and electrical safety, emergency preparedness, etc.

Do: Modify annual competency training based upon the Travelers profession and work setting as well as changes imposed by regulatory agencies (Joint Commission, OSHA, etc)

14. NURSIS – Nursing Candidates are checked against the NCSBN’s [NURSIS](#) database. Agencies are able to enroll in NURSIS E-Notify which provides automatic license and discipline notifications of all enrolled nurse travelers.

Do: Ensure that both the primary state and NURSIS database is checked. Because not all states report to NURSIS or provide full disciplinary information, investigate any incomplete disciplinary information with the primary licensing board.

Do: Educate your recruitment and credentialing staff not to use NURSIS exclusively as the license verification source unless it is designated as the primary source by the state board of nursing.

15. NPDB - NP, PA, or other independent practitioners are checked against the [NPDB](#) (National Practitioner Database). The NPDB continuous query provides the most comprehensive database for all healthcare professional disciplines and has the added benefit of providing continuous monitoring.

Quality & Compliance Operations

Reporting to Licensing/Certification Boards – The staffing firm investigates and reports practice violations that are supported by sufficient, confirmed information, to the appropriate state licensing body. In every situation, consider a report to all boards where active licenses are held. Reference: [NATHO Board Reporting Best Practice Guidelines](#)

Subcontractor Compliance – Staffing firms working with other staffing partners in a subcontractor relationship holds each subcontractor to the same standards adopted by the firm and those standards desired by the specific client.

Laws and Regulations – Staffing firms are knowledgeable of the laws and regulations in force in all states in which they are placing supplemental staff and adopt policies and procedures that support compliance with these laws and regulations. Staffing firms secure all required additional licenses to operate a healthcare staffing firm including, but not limited to nursing pool licenses, for each state in which they provide staffing services.

Complaint/Incident Investigation - Staffing firms have a formal process to investigate any performance complaints against a healthcare traveler that shall include at a minimum, interviews with the client or client representative, the Traveler's manager or supervisor at the time of the incident, any witnesses to the incident, and the impacted Traveler. Complaints pertaining to clinical practice and patient care should be investigated by an individual with clinical knowledge such as a clinical nurse liaison, healthcare risk management professional, or other similarly licensed healthcare professional.

Coaching and Counseling - Staffing firms have a process to share performance feedback with traveling healthcare professionals as a way to assist with performance improvement and the Traveler's continued professional growth and development including providing opportunities for continuing education.

Client Communication - Staffing firms will collaborate with client facilities and other partners to investigate clinical incidents and complaints and have a process to share traveler experience feedback and information with clients in an effort to promote quality delivery of care.

Quality Auditing - Staffing firms have a process to regularly audit all active staff for compliance with client requirements, license and certification expirations, and annual occupational screening and training

*Validated competency tests - use either internally developed or vendor exams that undergo a sound validation methodology with evidence. *Test validation* is an ongoing process of developing an argument that a specific test, its score interpretation or use is valid. The interpretation and use of testing data should be validated in terms of content, substantive, structural, external, generalizability, and consequential aspects of construct validity (Messick, 1994)