

**cover letter** (letter introducing a job applicant to a potential employer), you'll be ready to start contacting employers. This job-seeking process starts with learning the skills you need to find a job that's a good match for you.

### Finding the Right Job for You

Looking for and finding the right job for you requires planning and job-seeking skills. In this chapter, you'll learn what steps to follow when you're ready to find a job. These skills will help you narrow down the type of job to look for and the most productive ways to spend your time finding it.

Where are the best employment opportunities that match your qualifications and **occupational preferences**—the types of work and work settings that you prefer? Your options will be somewhat governed by the discipline in which you are training. Depending on your chosen occupation, consider hospitals, outpatient facilities, home care agencies, community health clinics, rehabilitation facilities, physician practices, mental health centers, public health organizations, school systems, radiology imaging centers, laboratories, nursing homes, and surgery centers. You might be surprised at the variety of places that employ people with your education and skills.

There are a lot of things to think about when identifying your occupational preferences:

- Do you want to work close to where you live now or move to another location?
- Do you want to work in the same place throughout the year, work seasonal jobs in different parts of the country, or rotate among different companies as a temporary worker?
- Do you want to work **full-time** (working approximately 40 hours per week) or **part-time** (working approximately 20 hours a week) with **employment benefits** (employer-paid insurance and retirement savings) or do you want a **supplemental** job that provides flexibility in work schedules but no guaranteed work hours or employment benefits?
- Do you want a job where you can stay and grow with the company over time or just a place to launch your career?
- Do you want a small organization where you can become multiskilled and work in more than one area or a large organization where you can become a specialist?
- Do you want a job that pays well but may require compromising on some of your other preferences such as location, work schedule, or employment benefits?

Identifying your occupational preferences will help guide your job search:

- Geographic location (city, state, region, country)
- Type of employment setting (inpatient, outpatient, community-based,

- **Employment status** (hired to work full-time, part-time, or supplemental)
- Work schedule and shift (days, evenings, nights, weekends, holidays, 10- or 12-hour shifts)
- Employment benefits (health, life, vision, and dental insurance; retirement and pension)
- Amount of compensation (pay) and paid time off for vacations, holidays, and sick leave.
- Opportunities for advanced training, tuition assistance, and job promotions
- Length of employment before eligibility for the company's retirement plan

### Places to Find Employment Information

Once you've narrowed down the types of places you would like to work, investigate labor trends, job openings, salary ranges, employment benefits, and opportunities for career development. Labor trends forecast the supply and demand for different types of health care workers. Supply and demand changes over time and varies in different parts of the country.

When there is a shortage of nurses, for example:

- Demand increases.
- There are more nursing jobs to fill than there are nurses to fill them.
- Nurses have an easier time finding a job and may have several job offers from which to choose.
- Salaries and benefits increase to help recruit nurses.
- Employers offer a **hire-on bonus** (extra compensation for accepting a job offer) as part of nurse recruitment.

Conversely, when there is an oversupply of nurses:

- Demand decreases.
- There are more nurses looking for jobs than there are jobs to be filled.
- Nurses have a more difficult time finding a job and there is more competition.
- Salaries and benefits remain steady.
- Hire-on bonuses for nurse recruitment temporarily disappear.

Nursing shortages are predicted to worsen as experienced nurses retire and leave the workforce. Yet not too long ago, nursing students just graduating from school had difficulty finding jobs in many parts of the country. The situation is similar in other professions such as physical therapy, radiography, and respiratory therapy in which supply and demand cycles have shifted over recent years.

Locate specific websites and other references to help you monitor the labor trends for your profession. By tracking the supply and demand for people in your field, you'll know the best time to apply for a job and how difficult or easy it might be to find the kind of job you're looking for.