

## A New Graduate's Guide to Anesthesia Careers

Despite years of intensive training and education, few anesthesia graduates receive instruction in navigating the recruitment process for employment. Knowing what to expect promotes better decision-making, as graduates take the first step toward reaching their goals in their chosen profession.

Graduating anesthesiologists and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) have different needs based on specialties, lifestyle, and personal choices. An examination of those needs and insight into the recruitment process deliver the essential tools for planning your career.

This resource document assists anesthesia graduates in better understanding the recruitment process. The following three questions provide a framework for guiding you through this life-changing process:

1. How should you prepare?
2. What do recruiters look for?
3. What should you know by the end of the interview?

### 1. How should you prepare?

You already have a huge investment in your anesthesia career. Properly preparing for your job search lays the foundation for your future. Allowing six to twelve months before graduation for preparation provides you with sufficient time for making critical decisions.

Preparation begins by combining practical steps with an evaluation of your professional and personal needs.

#### KNOW YOUR EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

One of the many positives of the anesthesia profession is the variety of career opportunities, including:

- Hospitals, academic medical centers, and ambulatory surgery centers
- Health care clinics and private practice settings
- Anesthesia management companies

The practice location and type of practice have a significant influence on your success and happiness. Consider your preferences regarding the setting, employer, and geographic location.

Have a general sense of what you want, but keep an open mind; remain flexible. Rule out those options that do not meet your basic needs. For example, if relocation is not an option, eliminate openings that are out-of-area. On the other hand, if you can be flexible on the location, it will increase your placement potential. It is important to distinguish between wants and needs so you can identify where there is room for flexibility.

### Survey of Final-Year Medical Residents

- 48 percent reported feeling "unprepared" for the business side of their medical careers
- 43 percent reported feeling "somewhat prepared"

2011 SURVEY OF FINAL-YEAR MEDICAL RESIDENTS, MERRITT HAWKINS REPORT

## Examples of Required Supporting Documents

- Curriculum vitae (CV)
- Current state medical license or documentation of application
- Copies of any other state licenses
- Current Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) certificate
- Copy of board certificate
- Certification and/or recertification card from the Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists (CCNA)
- Peer references

## UNDERSTAND THE SCOPE OF PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS

Regulations for administering anesthesia vary by state. For example, the scope of practice for CRNAs may require physician supervision in some states, while other states permit CRNAs to practice independently. Understand the differences between the various practice models:

- Independent practice
- Medical supervision, in which a physician oversees five or more CRNAs and concurrent procedures
- Medical direction, in which a physician oversees one to four CRNAs and concurrent procedures, and observes specific protocols

Each type of practice has its associated risks and benefits.

## ORGANIZE YOUR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Tracking down credentialing or other required documents slows the recruitment process. Review instructions to determine what is required and have the following documents available for recruiters:

### Application

Applications vary in format and content; however, the following are common elements included in most applications:

- Education and training, including specialties
- History of malpractice or disciplinary action
- Criminal background check
- List of hospital affiliations
- List of required supporting documents
- Written references with contact information

### Credentials

Recruiters and hiring managers require original source documents. For example, a staffing agency confirming your credentials from your employment as a locum tenens is not an acceptable form of verification. Depending on the employer's process, credentialing may take several months; therefore, gathering original source documents at the start of the recruitment process prevents delays.

### Curriculum Vitae

A professional *curriculum vitae* (CV) can make the difference in whether or not you secure an interview. Be thorough when developing your CV, and check dates and content for accuracy. See the sidebar on page 3.

## IDENTIFY REFERENCES

You will need several references, such as your residency or program director, who can speak to recruiters about your clinical skills and experience. It is a good idea to check in with each of your references after every interview to explain the position you are interviewing for and to identify areas they should emphasize when describing your experience and qualifications to the potential employer.

## Sample CV Format

FULL NAME, MD/DO/CRNA  
ADDRESS/CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE  
PHONE NUMBER/EMAIL ADDRESS

### OBJECTIVE

This optional element provides a brief description of your career goals.

### EDUCATION/TRAINING

List facility/program name, the city and state, and your title/department for each that apply.

- Fellowship Month/Year
- Residency Month/Year
- Internship Month/Year
- MD/DO/CRNA Month/Year
- Undergraduate Month/Year

### PROFESSIONAL WORK HISTORY

- Most recent Month/Year
- Previous Month/Year

### LICENSES/CERTIFICATIONS

- State Year
- Specialty Year
- Board certification Year

### PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS/ MEMBERSHIPS

- List names and any elected position(s) held.

### PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- List awards, honors, and community service.
- List published works.

### RESEARCH POSSIBLE OPENINGS

Spend time researching and educating yourself about the facility or group with an opening, its current anesthesia needs, and the structure of the anesthesia team. Research the market compensation rates for the location where you will be interviewing and benchmark against the Medical Group Management Association ([www.mgma.com](http://www.mgma.com)), an organization that conducts surveys and provides benchmarks on physician compensation and other metrics of group practice. Other resources for data and other information about physician compensation, supply and demand, and cost-of-living include the Sullivan Cotter Physician Survey ([www.sullivancotter.com](http://www.sullivancotter.com)) and the Association of American Medical Colleges ([www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)).

### 2. What do recruiters look for?

For purposes of this guide, the term “recruiter” may include an agency, anesthesia management company, hospital anesthesia department leader, hospital human resources department, or even members of the anesthesia team.

In addition to the requirements of the position, there are certain characteristics that recruiters look for in candidates.

### A STRONG CLINICAL SKILL SET

After your initial conversations with a recruiter about a specific position, you may be invited to meet with clinical leadership of the facility where the opportunity is located. An initial conversation with the anesthesia chief, medical director, or other clinical leader may be brief or in-depth, depending on the size of the anesthesia group. In these and subsequent conversations, you will likely be asked how you would respond to hypothetical clinical situations. In addition to confirming your clinical knowledge, these conversations will also help determine if you are a good fit for the anesthesia group and the facility.

Additional influencing factors include the reputation of a candidate’s training program, his or her references, and any specialty training required for the position, such as experience in high-risk obstetrics, cardiac surgery, pediatric surgery or regional anesthesia. Candidates enrolled at teaching hospitals have an added opportunity to shine through a positive rotation experience.

### GOOD INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Supplementing the time spent in the operating room (OR), recruiters often place candidates in interactive situations to evaluate interpersonal skills. For example, recruiters introduce candidates to other anesthesia team members and the team they would be working with in the OR, including nurses and other members of the anesthesia department. They may conduct a portion of the interview in the OR lounge or other settings where candidates can meet healthcare professionals who have various roles in the facility.

Recruiters also observe how candidates conduct themselves throughout the recruitment process. While they respect decisiveness, placing too many demands or restrictions on employment may leave recruiters questioning your ability to adjust to the unpredictability of working in a continuously changing environment such as an operating room.

#### HONEST REPRESENTATION

Recruiters reveal that the biggest mistake candidates make is in misrepresenting themselves or their intentions. Examples include misrepresentation of background, credentials, or weaknesses. The aforementioned are not always automatic disqualifications; however, nondisclosure could result in lost opportunity. Recruiters view an honest representation of the situation as an important indicator of a candidate's character.

Finding the right candidate for a position is an arduous task. Embellishing your skills and training or expressing interest in a position you have no intention of accepting demonstrates a lack of respect for the recruiter's and facility's time, and can harm your reputation. Remain professional in your communications, and above all — be honest.

#### INTEREST IN THE POSITION

Recruiters take notice when you are well-prepared, ask the right questions, and are responsive to requests. The following approach conveys a sincere interest in the position, which encourages recruiters to consider your qualifications carefully:

##### **Prepare for the Interview**

Your preparation for the interview underscores your investment in the process. Researching the position, the facility, and the team furnishes you with information for better decision-making and exhibits a professionalism recruiters appreciate.

Do your homework, learn about the opportunity, and be prepared to ask the right questions. Your preparation should also enable you to answer questions in the most complete and comprehensive way. At the same time, make sure you devote as much time to listening as you do to speaking.

##### **Ask the Right Questions**

Recruiters expect the standard questions about compensation and work hours. However, when you ask about the team and your professional development, it signals your genuine interest in contributing to the team's success.

Questions to ask include:

- What is the organization's mission, vision, and values?
- What are the practice details and scheduling requirements?
- What is the case volume and level of acuity?
- Can you walk me through the mentoring and proctoring process?
- Are there other ways to get involved with the organization?

*"Assembling the right team goes beyond selecting properly credentialed and clinically proficient providers..."*

*It incorporates recruiting and developing staff and leaders responsible for retaining the hospital's most valued employees."*

ANESTHESIA DOES NOT HAVE TO  
BE A BLACK BOX  
SOMNIA ANESTHESIA WHITE PAPER

### Convey Responsiveness

The way you respond to requests influences the recruiter's perception of your interest in the position. A lack of urgency in responding communicates indifference; a lack of patience communicates anxiety and may be of concern to the recruiter. Confirm your interest by being accessible, cordial, and timely in your responses.

Recruiting is more than finding the most clinically gifted candidate. It is finding the right fit for the team, the facility or group, and the community they serve. By being prepared, showing flexibility, and demonstrating the interpersonal skills required for effective teamwork, you prove you have the added talent recruiters are looking for.

### 3. What should you know by the end of the interview?

Before you leave the final interview, you should have a much better understanding of the position and the expectations of the hiring entity. You should also have the information you need to assess whether the position fulfills your professional and personal needs.

Use the following as a checklist for the information you need:

#### PRACTICE DETAILS

A thorough understanding of the practice and its requirements assists you in deciding if it is the right fit for your situation. Make sure you receive information regarding the following areas:

#### Staffing Model/MD-CRNA Ratio

- What type of staffing model is in place (e.g., all physician, care team model, or all CRNAs)?
- What are CRNA direction/supervision requirements?
- How many anesthesia providers are in the practice/group?
- What is the breakdown by provider type and specialty? (e.g., anesthesiologists, CRNAs, anesthesia assistants/technicians)?

#### Work Hours/Schedule

- What is the scope of coverage requirements?
- What is the typical number of work hours per day/week?
- What are expected start and finish times?
- What are the call procedures and post-call requirements?
- What kind of variability is there in the schedule?

#### Volume

- How many cases does the practice perform per year?
- How many and what type of locations does the practice/group cover?
- What are the types of cases?
- Is case volume expected to change or fluctuate?
- What case volume would be expected of the new hire?

## Anesthesia Specialties

*"The largest increase in anesthesia subspecialty occurred in pain medicine between 2006 and 2007."*

PHYSICIAN CHARACTERISTICS AND  
DISTRIBUTION IN THE US, 2012 EDITION  
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



## **Types of Specialty**

- What specialties are covered and what is their breakdown (e.g., cardiac, OB, pain management)?
- Are there specific requirements for covering certain specialties within the facility?

## **Facility Requirements**

- What are the credentialing and privileging requirements?

## **Stability of the Practice/Group**

- How would recruiters describe the team dynamics?
- What is the team's relationship with surgeons? The hospital?
- What is the length of the anesthesia group's contract with the facility?

## **COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS**

The compensation and benefits of an anesthesia provider are commensurate with your education, training, and experience. However, not all compensation packages are created equal. Blend realistic expectations with the recognition that compensation should not be your sole focus. The highest-paying position will not always be the best fit.

There are significant variables to keep in mind when considering compensation and benefits for anesthesia practitioners. For example, one position might offer a flexible schedule and other lifestyle benefits, but a lower salary. On the other hand, a higher-paying position may require longer hours and offer a more limited benefits package. Other factors that may affect compensation include coverage and call requirements, the location of the facility and other considerations including the revenue generated by the anesthesia practice.

## **Total Compensation**

Review compensation for competitiveness, but also review the policies for time off and other benefit offerings, including opportunities for Continuing Medical Education/Continuing Education (CME/CE). Additionally, some offers may include other variables such as signing bonuses, assistance repaying student loans, and/or relocation expenses. Be sure that you fully understand any service and repayment obligations that are required as a function of receiving these types of payments.

General benefits may include health, life and disability insurance, a 401k program, professional malpractice insurance, payment of state licenses and recertification fees, and Paid Time Off (PTO). Each hiring entity will structure compensation in very different ways and will take into account those benefits they feel may most effectively support the practice.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Your professional development is a lifetime commitment; therefore, make sure you understand the metrics for growth and the performance review process. Learn what assistance the practice or group provides through mentoring and proctoring programs, as well as continuing medical education. Ask questions about the clinical orientation and level of support provided by experienced practitioners to new graduates.

At the end of the interview, ask about the next steps in the hiring process if you are unsure. Be candid if you have concerns about the position. Now is the time to set the tone for your next conversation with your potential employer.

#### PERSONAL NEEDS FULFILLMENT

Your personal needs affect the decisions you make regarding your profession. For example, if relocating, obtain information about the lifestyle of the community and the housing situation in specific areas. If you have a family, you may need information on job opportunities for your spouse or the quality of various schools in the area. Also, look for information about the quality and reputation of the health care facility and the level of clinician and employee retention.

Align the offer of employment with your personal and professional needs. Be realistic and remain flexible in your assessment.

#### Top 10 Qualities of an Effective Anesthesia Provider

When asked, recruiters shared the following Top 10 qualities of the ideal anesthesia provider candidate:

1. Clinically adept
2. Strong work ethic
3. Strong interpersonal skills and bedside manner
4. Team player
5. Good communicator
6. Ethical
7. Consistent use of good judgment
8. Accessibility
9. Flexibility
10. Responsiveness

Investing in the recruitment process is an investment in your future. It could be the most important thing you do for your career.

#### ABOUT SOMNIA ANESTHESIA

*Somnia Anesthesia optimizes anesthesia services for hospitals, surgery centers and office-based surgical practices nationwide by combining clinical excellence with unparalleled management acumen. Owned and operated by anesthesiologists since 1996, Somnia provides a turnkey, solutions-based approach to anesthesia management. With an extensive in-house infrastructure and a single-minded focus on anesthesiology, Somnia builds and manages local anesthesia teams that consistently deliver the highest quality patient care, enhance operating room performance, increase revenues, and achieve full surgeon and patient satisfaction. Anesthesia services continues to be Somnia's only business. For more information visit: [www.somniainc.com](http://www.somniainc.com).*

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