



Supporting a New Paradigm to Help Rural Hospitals Survive

Traditional healthcare models won't stop the closure of rural hospitals. Effective solutions will require new approaches, sharp creative thinking and compassionate hearts. LocumConnections is helping craft those solutions through its non-traditional approach to locum tenens physician staffing.

In contrast to third-party outside staffing firms, LocumConnections operates in the clinical healthcare space. Its founders were physicians who saw something lacking in the way temporary clinical staffing needs were being met by traditional locum tenens firms, and they decided to do something about it, putting their healthcare and business acumen to work to benefit the industry as a whole. Since that time, the company's reach has spread nationally in hospital medicine, as well as other inpatient, primary care and facility based providers—many of them in rural locations.

Firsthand Rural Hospital Leadership Experience

"We do more than just connect doctors to jobs," said Talbot "Mac" McCormick, M.D., President and CEO of LocumConnections. "Because our company was founded by and is led by physicians, we are passionate about the issues that affect people's lives, and we have the experience and understanding to solve those issues."

Before his position with LocumConnections, Dr. McCormick ran the hospitalist program for Trinity Mother Frances Health System in Tyler, Texas, and saw firsthand the plight of rural hospitals in the area, one of which, East Texas Medical Center in Gilmer, is joining the ranks several other hospitals around the country closing primarily because of declining reimbursement rates from Medicare and Medicaid.

With LocumConnections, he has grown the company as an advocate for the survival of rural hospitals. “As rural hospitals rapidly close across the nation, LocumConnections supports the National Rural Health Association in its work to protect access to care for millions of rural Americans,” he said.

LocumConnections: ‘Doing Our Part’

According to Dr. McCormick, LocumConnections understands the important role locum tenens staffing can play in helping rural hospitals meet the demands of the physician shortage. “Effective solutions will require new methods, including a more strategic approach to locum tenens staffing that goes beyond trying to fill a last-minute need with temporary ‘placeholder’ staff,” he said.

“Because our company operates in the clinical healthcare space, we bring a unique understanding that delivers significant strategic value to a hospital program with their recruitment investment. We are doing our part to deliver that value to hospitals across the spectrum—from rural, small-town locations to major metropolitan areas.”

Dr. McCormick has built a team that has a particular passion for solving the challenges of rural hospitals. A few of them share their stories here.

A Mindset Shaped by Personal Experience

Joseph “Jody” Turner
Vice President, LocumConnections

A native of rural Texas, Jody Turner understands the difficulty rural hospitals face in attracting full-time staff physicians. “I grew up in Gilmer, a town of 5,000 that had to close its hospital doors just recently,” he said. “My family still lives in Gilmer, and like other folks in the community, they are concerned that it makes access to healthcare services that much more difficult, especially with an aging demographic and most hospital systems being 20-40 miles away. Being an executive now with a physician-led locum tenens staffing firm, I have a mindset shaped by these personal experiences, and am proud that our organization is invested to be part of the solution to the problems of rural hospitals today.”

Turner added that in requests for assistance from across the country, LocumConnections witnesses the retraction of physicians in rural areas nearly every day. “The recognition of alternative collaborative approaches will be necessary in the days ahead, such as interactive remote presence telemedicine and other related services,” he said.

THE LOCUMCONNECTIONS MISSION

To go beyond the definition of locum tenens as “placeholder” staff. We believe that temporary assignments demand the best doctors, the best clinical and personal fit, the best behind-the-scenes services like payroll and travel to ensure the experience is a good one for all concerned. If these things are met, the locum tenens option can deliver significant strategic value to a hospital’s recruiting investment. We are committed to deliver this value to our partners.

+ First-Time Profitability for One Rural Facility

Sara Savoy Gunter
Recruitment Director, LocumConnections

Sara Savoy Gunter’s biggest success came recently when LocumConnections staffed a rural Kentucky hospital’s entire hospitalist schedule—and helped the facility become profitable for the first time.

“They had tried other recruiting firms,” she said. “But we had the desire to help out and the passion to stay with the search and not give up.” LocumConnections also relied on its network of physicians who are comfortable in small-town settings, who understand the importance of rural hospitals and have an altruistic desire to help them survive. “It took about six weeks, but we provided them with a solution that is enabling them to transfer fewer patients to metropolitan hospitals and thus increase their admission rate.”

+ Blending Telemedicine and Locum Tenens Staffing

Dr. Dana Giarrizzi
National Medical Director, Eagle Telemedicine

New models of care include a blend of locum tenens staffing with interactive remote presence telemedicine, which helps bring specialist expertise to rural hospitals when they need it even when they can’t afford a full-time commitment. In her role as National Medical Director for Eagle Telemedicine, Dr. Dana Giarrizzi delivers telemedicine solutions that can include collaboration with locum tenens hospitalists and physicians through LocumConnections. She often finds greatest satisfaction in her work with rural hospitals.

"Patients in small towns are usually so appreciative of the fact that you are bringing care to them that they otherwise wouldn't have or would have to go somewhere else to get," she says. "All hospitals have challenges—staffing, recruitment and retention—but in rural facilities the issues so often are accentuated, and it is especially gratifying to find solutions because their positive impact is often more readily apparent, too."

She appreciates the fact that, among its hundreds of locum tenens physicians, LocumConnections has attracted many who enjoy working in small-town settings and who understand the challenges of small rural hospitals. They also have experience working with remote presence telemedicine programs, either as consulting hospitalists or physicians working remotely or on-site staff being supported by a remote specialist. For Dr. Giarrizzi, it's a winning combination.

Commitment to Rural Hospitals From the Top Down

Christina Muffoletto
Senior Client Development Manager, LocumConnections

With nine years in the medical staffing industry, Christina Muffoletto started work at LocumConnections in January 2015. She specializes in psychiatric and primary care staff in rural community health centers, and she sees clearly the commitment of the company to ensure the quality of rural healthcare. "The commitment comes from the top down here," she said. "Especially the passion Jody and Dr. Mac have for rural hospitals, and their experience in staffing them properly. Our company has so much to offer in our expertise and our network of providers, and a very real desire to help hospitals maintain staff coverage and to be sure patients have the care they need— without having to drive for hours to find it."

An Advocate for Rural Hospitals

LocumConnections positions itself as an advocate for the healthcare industry, helping hospitals meet the demands of the physician shortage while focusing on stable pricing and ensuring locum tenens staffing is a viable part of a hospital's long-term strategy. Its network of providers includes hospitalists, emergency medicine, primary care, urgent care, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. With a rapidly growing footprint in the Southeast, Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, LocumConnections continues to expand its services to meet the needs of doctors and hospitals across the United States.

THE LOCUMCONNECTIONS VISION

We want to run a different kind of locum tenens firm, to grow our already substantial reputation for arranging the very best medical staff coverage for the hospitals that partner with us. Even as our business evolves and becomes more modern, moving with technology, we will embrace traditional business principles—respect, honesty, follow-through, and careful attention to detail.

They are the things that have brought us success.



By Physicians. For Physicians.

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