

Guide for Family Medicine Locums in a Rural or Northern Community



Locuming in rural and Northern Ontario can be an exciting and rewarding experience with unique benefits. Embrace your locum assignment as an opportunity to learn about local culture and apply the full scope of your clinical skills.

This checklist is intended to help you stay organized and have a positive locum experience.

Planning Your Locum Assignment

- Make Realistic Commitments.** It's easy for your schedule to fill up quickly. Rural communities cannot easily adjust to last-minute scheduling changes because they have less physician capacity than their urban counterparts. Review your schedule carefully before booking a locum and make realistic commitments.
- Know Your Scope of Practice.** Clarify up front the scope of practice, on-call obligations. Clearly communicate with the care team about your comfort level and limitations.
- Optimize Your Impact.** When co-ordinating your rural/Northern locum, there may be other opportunities to help provide physician coverage locally. For example, when speaking to a clinic, ask about whether shifts are available at the hospital for inpatient care or emergency department coverage.
- Optimize Your Time.** To maximize your time and reduce travel, consider looking at neighboring rural communities to schedule "adjoining" locums. This gives you the opportunity to explore and to provide support to an entire region.

Travel and Logistics

- Accommodation.** Ask your locum contact about accommodation options. Book early to get your preferred location.
- Give Yourself Enough Time to Travel.** Flight and/or weather-related delays can occur when traveling to rural communities, so allow extra travel time. Check your flight status online before going to the airport and stay in touch with the community to let them know if you may not arrive in time for your locum.
- Know Who to Call.** If you experience travel delays, communities are happy to assist. Make sure you have the number of a community contact.
- Your Arrival.** If it's your first time in a community make sure you have confirmed transportation on arrival. Have you booked a rental car in advance, or do you need to be picked up? If you will be driving, have your accommodation details and directions readily available.
- Late-Night Arrivals.** If you are travelling from a large city, you may not be used to restaurants closing at earlier times, or hotel desks not being staffed throughout the night. If you will be arriving late at night, know your options on arrival by asking your locum contacts or a contact at your accommodation beforehand.
- Know How You Will Get Around.** Will you be driving your car or a rental car? If not, consider the alternate transportation arrangements you will make to get around within the community (e.g. taxi).
- Dietary Requirements.** Rural communities may have fewer options for special dietary requirements. If you have any, let your locum contacts know beforehand so they can offer suggestions.

During Your Locum Assignment

- Keep Your Receipts.** If your expenses are eligible for reimbursement, make sure to keep all of your receipts. Original receipts will be required to receive reimbursement.
- Know Your Patient Population.** Work with administrative staff, physicians, and other health professionals to gain an understanding of the practice population and demographics.
- Support the Patients' Relationship with their Primary Physician.** Find a balance between your practice style and that of the rural physician you are replacing. Actively contribute your experience while being sensitive to the culture of the practice.
- Keep Track of Required Follow Up.** Track updates to provide to the returning physician regarding patient changes, such as hospitalizations, and a list of results for follow up.

After Your Locum Assignment

- Provide Feedback.** Communities want you to have a positive locum experience. Make sure to provide feedback to your local contacts about what worked well and what could be improved.
- Stay in Touch.** Building strong relationships with communities over time can lead to regular locum assignments, and enable you to become familiar with hospital/clinic process, staff and patients, creating an even more rewarding and impactful experience.

This guide is part of a collection of [Resources for Rural and Northern Locums](#)

- Guide for Family Medicine Locums in a Rural or Northern Community
- OCFP Rural Medicine Mentorship Network
- Resources for Locuming in Francophone Communities
- Rural Family Medicine Locum Program (RFMLP) Program Resources:
 - Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) Training
 - Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) Training
 - Ontario Indigenous Cultural Safety Program

HealthForceOntario's [Transition into Practice Service \(TiPS\) Toolkit](#)

An online suite of resources, including locuming, to support a smooth transition into practice for new physicians.

Available in accessible format upon request: www.healthforceontario.ca/acs