

More and more travel nurses find themselves being grounded

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FULL TEXT

Jun. 8 - During the height of the coronavirus pandemic, the demand for travel nurses was so high some nurses were pulling in paychecks to rival surgeons'.

Then, to keep staffed nurses from packing their bags for a more lucrative travel gig, hospitals began offering loan forgiveness, bonuses, tuition assistance and other perks.

Hospitalizations from COVID have declined, however, and funding is ending on both the federal and state levels.

Now, some travel nurses are seeing their contracts canceled.

Tiffanie Jones was driving from Tampa, Florida, to Cheyenne, Wyoming, when she found out her contract had been canceled, Kaiser Health News reported. The 17-year nursing veteran said about half of the travel nurses in her Facebook group have lost their jobs in recent weeks.

The demand for registered nurse travelers has dropped by a third in the month leading up to April 10, according to data from staffing agency Aya Healthcare, although openings have rebounded a bit recently. This is likely fueled by COVID variants that have led to increased hospitalizations.

"The seven-day rolling average of new COVID cases in Georgia increased to nearly 1,200 on May 9, which is the most up-to-date confirmed case data from the Georgia Department of Public Health. Less than two months ago, the rolling average was about 250 daily cases of COVID," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Zachary Hansen wrote just two weeks ago.

Jones told KHN her traveling stint raised a big question: How much is a nurse worth?

On the road, Jones said, she "could breathe financially for the first time in years," sometimes making twice what she did as a staff nurse.

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DETAILS

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