

The Shift Worker's Guide to Building Wealth

For nurses, travel nurses, and healthcare professionals on variable schedules

SIRMIUM CAPITAL

The honest truth about overtime: A \$20k bump in OT feels like a win — until the FAFSA calculation, higher tax bracket, and missed compounding work against it. This guide shows you how to keep more of what you earn.

1.5%

Average fee hospitals charge in your 403(b) — vs. 0.04% at Vanguard

\$200K

Lifetime fee drag on a \$150k salary over 30 years at 1.5%

\$46K

Max you can shield from taxes with 403(b) + 457(b) stacking

1 The 403(b) + 457(b) Stack

- Most nurses max the 403(b) and stop at \$23,000/year
- If your employer offers a 457(b), add another \$23,000
- Total: \$46,000 shielded from federal income tax this year
- This also lowers your AGI — which matters for FAFSA aid
- Ask HR: "Do we offer a 457(b) alongside the 403(b)?"

2 The Overtime & FAFSA Problem

- 2026 FAFSA changes count OT income more aggressively
- A \$20k OT boost can reduce your child's aid by \$8–15k
- Fix: push OT income into pre-tax accounts before it hits your AGI
- Maximize 403(b) contributions in heavy OT months first
- Travel nurse stipends: document your tax home carefully (IRS audit risk)

The Rollover Window — What To Do When You Change Jobs

SITUATION

Left a job with a 403(b) balance



QUESTION

New employer 403(b) or 401(k) available?



YES → ROLL IT

Transfer within 60 days. Never take the paper check — triggers 20% withholding.

NO PLAN YET?

Open a Traditional IRA first, then roll in



MISS THE 60 DAYS?

10% early withdrawal penalty + full income tax. Non-recoverable.

Your 5-Minute Financial Audit

- Find your 403(b) fund expense ratio — log into your plan provider, look under "Fund Details"
- Ask HR if a 457(b) is available — most don't advertise it
- If you have heavy OT, confirm your contribution % is high enough to offset the AGI increase
- If you changed jobs in the past 12 months, confirm your old balance was properly rolled
- Travel nurses: confirm your tax home is documented with receipts (IRS compliance)