

## **Introduction**

Today's health care environment is complex and creates demands requiring the professional nurse to be an astute critical thinker, confident and competent when caring for patients and families in multiple health care settings. However, since organizations are faced with increasing demands on resource utilization and simultaneous cost reductions, adequate attention to ensuring successful transition for the newly licensed nurse may not be appropriately designed, managed, supported or evaluated. Operating under the premise that the newly licensed nurse entry into practice nursing preparation cannot alone meet the requirements for the newly licensed nurse to be confident and competent as they transition into his or her professional role, it becomes the inherent responsibility of the nursing profession—along with health care organizations—to define and implement strategies to create a learning and supportive professional environment that will position the new graduate nurse for success.

The guiding principles defined in this document recognize the following dimensions of development: clinical reasoning, technical skills acquisition, shaping emotional intelligence, socialization, professional engagement and on-going continuing education. These guidelines, when effectively implemented will define the model that assures the success of the novice nurse as they transition into their professional role, create a professional bond between the new newly licensed nurse and the organization, and effectively role model the professional culture required for sustaining nurses within the profession. Most importantly, the benefactors of the diligence to this transition will be the patients and families being cared for by the newly licensed nurse.

## **Assumptions**

- A successful transition into practice by newly licensed nurses is necessary to provide successful patient, individual, staff and organizational outcomes.
- An expectation exists for the newly licensed nurse to demonstrate engagement and accountability in the transition process.
- The nurse manager is the key driver for ensuring the experience of the newly licensed nurse is successful.
- An expected gap exists between the knowledge, skills and perceptions of the new newly licensed nurse and those required of a competent registered nurse.
- To provide patient-centered care, the widely diverse workforce must become culturally competent in areas including, but not limited to age, cultural traditions, religion and ethnicity.
- The development of professional nursing practice follows Benner's novice-to-expert continuum.

- Entry into the complexity of nursing work and assimilation of the professional role for the individual are major life events. Reduction of work environment stressors is essential.
- A wide variety of support requirements are necessary from all levels throughout the organization
- Ongoing dialogue and collaboration should occur between academic and practice leaders that include a focus on the transition into practice.
- Outcomes of new newly licensed transition programs include improved retention and high engagement within the profession, organization and area of practice.

### **AONL Guiding Principles**

- Commitment for newly licensed nurse transition into practice occurs across all levels of the organization.
  - Senior Leadership
  - Nursing Leadership
  - Peers
  - Medical Staff
  - Interdisciplinary Colleagues
- The nurse manager must achieve and is accountable for, the leadership competencies that support the transition of the newly licensed nurse into their professional role.
- Preceptors demonstrate professional competency and have a strong desire to teach, coach and mentor.
- Preceptors are prepared and supported by qualified nurse educators.
- A structured transition into practice occurs in all settings and for all levels of academic preparation.
  - A continuous focus on evidence-based techniques and outcomes that foster patient safety and quality is evident throughout the transition process.
  - Widely diverse ages, ethnicity, backgrounds and experiences of new graduates are taken into account when developing educational, social and cultural supports.
  - The transition process is customized to the specific individual and practice area.
- Social affiliation supports are in place to mitigate the emotional stressor role.
- Organizations have in place policies and practices related to zero tolerance of lateral violence.
- Post transition support programs are in place to aid in the retention of the newly licensed nurse.
- Collaborative relationships exist with academic institutions that support dialogue to address preparation for practice gaps.

## Operational Definitions

- **Commitment:** Allocation and provision of the resources necessary for a successful transition by those involved in the transition of the newly licensed nurse into professional practice.
- **Interdisciplinary:** The health care professionals from varying specialties who work collaboratively with new newly licensed nurses as they assimilate into the team concept of patient care delivery. These disciplines incorporate the contribution of the new graduate in the development of the patient's care plan.
- **Social support:** Social opportunities, based on Maslow's theory that as the newly licensed nurse feels welcomed and accepted within the group, they will be receptive to learning.
- **Senior leadership:** Those within an organization who are responsible for defining the mission, vision and philosophy for the organization and are accountable for ensuring that strategies are designed and implemented to achieve the desired outcomes.

## The Evidence

- Nurses have a difficult transition into the health care environment (Casey, Fink, Krugman, & Propst, 2004; Delaney, 2003; Ross & Clifford, 2002; Suzuki & et. al., 2008).
- Studies indicated that standardized orientation programs with trained preceptors have shown to be beneficial in recruiting and retaining nurses (Burns & Northcutt, 2009; Cantrell & Browne, 2006, Duchscher, 2008; Goodwin-Esola, Deely & Powell, 2009; Strauss, 2009; Ward, 2009).
- Structured nursing orientation programs are part of hospital strategies to improve the work environment (May, Bazzoll & Gerland, 2006).
- Successful orientation programs promote confidence, competence, and satisfaction (Goodwin-Esola, Deely & Powell, 2009).
- Most hospitals have an orientation program but many lack structure and do not include a preceptor workshop (Goodwin-Esola, Deely & Powell, 2009; May, Bazzoll & Gerland, 2006; Ward, 2009).
- A novice nurse is a beginner, lacking experience in situations requiring performance; any nurse entering a new clinical situation is a novice (Benner, 2001, 1984).
- Novice nurses need to be guided by expert nurses (Benner, 2001, 1984).
- Expert nurses must be identified and taught to understand the processes necessary to advance the novice nurses through knowledge and skill acquisition and implementation (Delaney, 2003).
- A preceptor workshop is an effective method for educating the expert nurse to the role and responsibilities of being a preceptor (Smedley & Penney, 2009).

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