

Policy Brief: U.S. Nursing Leadership Supports Practice/Academic Partnerships to Assist the Nursing Workforce during the COVID-19 Crisis

Purpose

This policy brief is the collaborative effort of nursing leaders who propose and support academic-practice partnerships between health care facilities and prelicensure registered nursing (RN) and practical/vocational nursing (PN/VN) programs across the country during the COVID-19 crisis. This is one potential model to consider. It is not mandated, rather an innovative approach to meeting academic and workforce needs.

The proposed model requires cautious evaluation at the local level with a clear understanding that:

- The participation of student nurses and faculty is voluntary and must comply with any additional requirements mandated in state emergency response provisions or through existing Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements;
- The safety for all front-line providers of services across multiple points of care must be safeguarded through appropriate and prevailing infection control practices

Context

- COVID-19 is a virus affecting the entire world. To date, thousands of people in the U.S. have tested positive for the disease, and it is anticipated that many more will be affected in the near future. After observing the pattern of the virus, the U.S. anticipates an overabundance of patients inundating hospitals and possibly overwhelming the entire U.S. health care system.
- A significant demand is being placed on the entire nursing workforce, and this is anticipated to increase at an alarming rate.
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Benefits

This opportunity will not only provide much needed clinical education to assist in meeting program requirements, it is an unparalleled opportunity for nursing students to assist the nation in a time of crisis and learn the principles of population health and emergency management. This academic-practice model demonstrates that in the midst of a periling disruption in the environment, such as COVID-19, continuous innovation can occur.

Recommendations

1. Health care facilities and nursing programs are encouraged to promulgate plans to take advantage of this opportunity and make every effort to reach out to eligible nursing students and inform them of the opportunity.
2. Health care facilities and nursing programs are encouraged to collaborate to identify ways to accomplish appropriate faculty supervision of the nursing student-employee to achieve the final learning outcomes of the nursing program. For example, the health care facility could hire the nursing program faculty to oversee the nursing student-employee, the nursing program faculty could hold joint appointment by the college/university/school and the health care facility, or the health care facility-employed preceptors could oversee the nursing student-employee with nursing program faculty oversight.
3. Nursing program leaders/faculty are encouraged to work with health care facility representatives to align