

Recommendations Regarding Clinical Education in Practical Nurse Education (PNE) Programs

Background

PNE programs have faced challenges procuring clinical education opportunities for students in hospitals and in other health facilities. To substitute for the lack of clinical placements, educators have recommended the increased use of “simulation” as a teaching method. In response to these developments, the State Education Department (NYSED) began a review of laws and standards that govern clinical education offered by NYSED registered PNE programs. The goal of the review is to identify opportunities to improve the regulation of PNE program clinical education. The NYSED review identified three potential areas for improvement:

- (1) NYSED should more clearly describe acceptable clinical education methods.
- (2) NYSED should describe the quality and quantity of clinical education that should be provided by PNE programs.
- (3) NYSED should describe how it will address requests to reduce clinical education hours in PNE programs.

1.) Acceptable Clinical Education Methods

Federal and New York laws and nursing education accreditation standards do not prescribe the number of hours of clinical education that PNE programs must offer. Moreover, these laws and standards do not provide a specific definition of “clinical”, “simulation”, or “skills laboratory” instruction. The descriptions below of Didactic Education and Clinical Education could be used by NYSED when reviewing applications for registering new PNE programs and for reviewing requests to change PNE program curriculums.

Didactic Education: Classroom instruction and/or online instruction (including online simulation instruction) provided by PNE program faculty (for which credit is earned). Didactic Education may be co-taught by PNE program faculty and licensed health care professionals with expertise in the subject matter being taught

Note: Many PNE programs do not award “credit” to students. In this document, the term “credit” means PNE program faculty planned learning experiences that are described in a PNE program curriculum and which apply towards completion of the PNE program.

Clinical Education: Faculty planned education experiences that require students to be actively engaged in practicing nursing skills and decision-making at least 70% (or some other %) of the time for which credit is earned. Clinical Education must be described in detail in the PNE program curriculum. There are three types of Clinical Education:

1. **Faculty Supervised Patient Care Education (FSPCE):** PNE program faculty supervised direct patient care education in a hospital, nursing home, or other setting in which patients receive care from nurses. PNE program faculty are responsible for personally guiding, observing, and evaluating student clinical learning. PNE program faculty must be present in the clinical setting and immediately available while students are engaged in patient care. As part of FSPCE, PNE program faculty may assign students to participate in clinical conferences, patient care observation, and similar clinical learning experiences. However, PNE program faculty are responsible for ensuring that each student is actively engaged in providing patient care (practicing skills and nursing judgement) at least 70% (or some other %) of the time for which credit is earned (in each clinical setting and in each course). PNE program faculty to student ratio shall not exceed 1:10 (or some other ratio, possibly 1:8).
2. **Skills/Simulation Laboratory Education:** Clinical practice education taught by PNE program faculty in a nursing skills or simulation laboratory (for which credit is earned). PNE program faculty ensure that all students are actively engaged in practicing nursing skills and decision-making at least 70% (or some other %) of the time for which credit is earned. Skills/Simulation Laboratory Education may be co-taught by PNE program faculty and educators with expertise in clinical simulation instruction.
3. **Nursing Practicum Education:** There are two types are Nursing Practicum Education. (1) PNE faculty supervised practical education in settings in which nurses do not commonly practice, such as child day care centers or homeless shelters. Students must be actively engaged in practicing nursing related skills and nursing judgement at least 70% (or

some other %) of the time for which credit is earned. (2) Preceptor supervised patient care education in a setting in which nurses practice. The preceptor must be a RN or LPN who has been vetted and approved by the PNE program or approved by PNE program faculty in accordance with PNE program policy. Students should be engaged in practicing nursing skills and judgement at least 70% (or some other %) of the time for which credit is earned. The preceptor must personally supervise patient care provided by the PN students to ensure student and patient safety. PNE program faculty remain responsible for planning and evaluating student learning.

Learning experiences that **do not** qualify as Clinical Education include: (a) observation and similar experiences that do not require students to practice nursing skills and judgement as described above; and (b) learning activities that do not require clinical supervision from PNE Program Faculty or a preceptor.

2.) Clinical Education for PNE Programs

All NYSED registered PNE programs should prepare students for safe, effective, entry level LPN practice. Newly licensed LPNs commonly work in: (1) hospitals and long-term care facilities; (2) clinics and medical practices (including pediatric practices and OBGYN practices); and (3) psychiatric/mental health facilities.

Future PNE programs should offer clinical education that allow PN students to provide nursing care to adequate numbers and types of actual patients (e.g., acuity, case mix, age, gender) in settings in which LPNs practice. The PNE program curriculum should offer, **at a minimum**, 300 (or some other #) clock hours of **Faculty Supervised Patient Care Education (FSCPE)**, which allows each PN student to provide nursing care to:

- (1) adult patients in a hospital and residential health care facility, and possibly in additional settings in which nurses provide care to adult patients;
- (2) pediatric patients in settings in which nurses provide care to pediatric patients;
- (3) patients receiving treatment for acute and chronic psychiatric, behavioral, and/or cognitive conditions in settings in which nurses provide mental health/psychiatric nursing care to patients; and,
- (4) maternal/newborn, postpartum and/or pregnant patients in settings in which nurses provide care to this population.

PNE programs may offer PN students additional educational experiences (i.e., Skills/Simulation Laboratory Education, Nursing Practicum Education) to supplement 300 or greater hours of FACPE described above, or to prepare PN students for hands-on care with actual patients.

PNE program faculty are responsible for personally evaluating student clinical practice as an element of ensuring that each student has demonstrated competencies necessary for safe, effective entry level LPN practice to each of the 4 patient populations described above.

NYSED would not expect all currently registered PNE programs to meet these criteria. However, NYSED would consider this guidance as well as other evidence-based proposals when reviewing applications for registering new PNE programs or for changing PNE program curriculums. NYSED should closely monitor clinical education offered by all PNE programs over the next 2 years, collecting data in annual reports. NYSED should evaluate relevant data collected during the period and determine whether all PNE programs should meet the Clinical Education criteria described above or similar criteria. PNE programs should be granted a reasonable period of time to come into compliance with new clinical education requirements.

3.) Requests to reduce clinical education hours in a PNE program curriculum.

Each NYSED registered PNE program offers a unique combination of classroom learning, skills laboratory learning (simulation), and hands on patient care education, and may offer additional learning opportunities, such as online-instruction. Given this variation in clinical education offered by PNE programs, NYSED should continue to review requests to reduce Clinical Education in a PNE program on a case-by-case basis.

PNE Program Information to be provided to NYSED

The education institution must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of NYSED, that the PNE program (with the proposed curricular changes) will prepare students for safe, competent, entry level LPN practice for each of the following populations: adult patients

with acute and chronic health conditions, pediatric patients with acute and chronic health conditions, obstetrical or pregnant patients, and patients receiving treatment for acute and chronic psychiatric, behavioral, and/or cognitive conditions. The educational institution should expect to provide the following information to NYSED:

- The total number of hours of Didactic Education, Faculty Supervised Patient Care Education, Nursing Practicum Education and Skills/Simulation Laboratory Education in the PNE program curriculum with the proposed curricular changes.
- A description of all nursing courses, and the Clinical Education offered in each course.
- A description of each PNE program Clinical Affiliate. A Clinical Affiliate is a hospital, nursing home, medical facility, school, or other entity that provides nursing services to patients, and makes patient care opportunities available to PN students pursuant to a written agreement with the PNE program.
- A description of how the PNE program curriculum (with the proposed changes) prepares students for safe effective entry level LPN care of each of the following populations: (1) adult patients with acute and chronic health conditions (2) maternal/newborn and/or pregnant patients (3) pediatric patients with acute and chronic health conditions, and (4) patients being treated for acute and chronic mental health, developmental, behavioral and/or cognitive conditions.
- The extent to which the PNE program curriculum (with the proposed changes) meet the Faculty Supervised Patient Care Criteria described in the section 1, above.
- How the PNE program ensures that students in clinical learning situations involving patient care are appropriately supervised at all times to ensure patient and student safety, and that the level of responsibility delegated to the student is appropriate to the student's level of training.
- How the PNE program ensures satisfactory completion by all PN students of Clinical Education requirements and how the PNE program remedies any identified gaps.
- Information concerning qualifications of the PNE Program Director and PNE program faculty.
- Information concerning PNE program outcomes over the past 3 years: (1) first time NCLEX pass rates; (2) program completion rates; and possibly (3) additional learning outcomes and employment rates.
- Any additional pertinent information, as requested by NYSED.
- Any additional pertinent information that the education institution wants to provide in support of its application.

NYSED Consideration of Requests to reduce Clinical Education in PNE Programs

When considering a proposal to reduce the hours of Clinical Education in an PNE program curriculum, NYSED should perform a qualitative evaluation of the PNE program curriculum (with the proposed changes) to ascertain whether the PNE program will adequately prepare PN students for safe, effective entry level practice. NYSED should carefully consider the extent to which the PNE program prepares its students to care for: adult patients with acute and chronic health conditions, pediatric patients with acute and chronic health conditions, obstetrical or pregnant patients, and patients receiving treatment for acute and chronic psychiatric, behavioral, and/or cognitive conditions. NYSED should also consider the ability of the PNE program to implement the PNE program curriculum (with the proposed changes) and meet applicable PNE program standards and other requirements.

NYSED Approval

NYSED should approve a reduction in Clinical Education in an PNE program curriculum only if NYSED finds that the PNE program (with the proposed curricular changes) will prepare students for safe, competent, entry level LPN practice and meets applicable PNE program standards and requirements (i.e., NCLEX-PN pass rates). As before, NYSED should separately approve specific numbers of hours of patient care education (now referred to as Faculty Supervised Patient Care Education and/or Nursing Practicum Education) and lab (now referred to as "Skills/simulation Laboratory Education") in the PNE program curriculum.

Additional NYSED Approval Option that offers more Flexibility to PNE Programs

NYSED should consider an additional approval option for PNE programs that offer more than 300 hours of Faculty Supervised Patient Care Education, which is described below.

NYSED could approve a PNE program curriculum with a specific number of hours Clinical Education, which must include, **at a minimum**, 300 (or some other #) hours of Faculty Supervised Patient Care Education, which allows each LPN student to provide nursing care to:

- (1) adult patients in a hospital and nursing home, and possibly additional settings in which nurses provide care to adult patients;
- (2) pediatric patients in settings in which nurses provide care to pediatric patients;
- (3) patients receiving treatment for acute and chronic psychiatric, behavioral, and/or cognitive conditions in settings in which nurses provide mental health/psychiatric nursing care to patients; and,
- (4) OBGYN, Maternal/newborn, and/or pregnant patients in settings in which nurses provide care to this population.

The PNE programs would have full flexibility to offer hours of Nursing Practicum Education, Skills/Simulation Laboratory Education, and/or additional Facility Supervised Patient Care Education to meet the total number of hours of Clinical Education in the NYSED approved PNE program curriculum.

The PNE program must obtain NYSED approval to:

- reduce the total number of clock hours of Clinical Education in its curriculum;
- offer less than 300 clock hours of FSPCE to PN students;
- eliminate FSPCE for any of the populations described above for any PN student;
- eliminate FSPCE in a hospital or nursing home.

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