



Position Statement

Preceptors

Background

A preceptor is one who guides, assesses, and validates the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to transition to a new role, specialty, or environment in the healthcare setting. As the definition implies, preceptors are integral to facilitating transitions in nursing practice. In addition to working with students in the clinical setting, preceptors facilitate others' transitions from academia to practice, from one practice setting to another, from one specialty to another, and from one practice role to another—such as from staff nurse to nurse manager (Ulrich, 2019). Virtually all nurses function as a preceptor during their professional career.

While precepting is an integral component of transitions in nursing, precepting does not meet the criteria of a specialty practice as established by the American Nurses Association (ANA, 2017). ANA delineates 14 criteria for recognition as a nursing specialty. Although preceptorship is a nursing role that meets a need, preceptors have no specialty association and lack “mechanisms to develop, support, review, disseminate, and integrate research into practice to substantiate and advance its knowledge base and evidence-based practice” (ANA, p. 13). As a result, ANA has not recognized precepting as a specialty nursing practice.

The Ulrich Precepting Model (Ulrich, 2019) identifies seven roles of the preceptor: teacher/coach, role model; leader/influencer; facilitator, socialization agent, evaluator, protector. This model recognizes that preceptors practice within the specific context of nursing and the larger context of healthcare. The Ulrich Precepting Model was validated in the 2020 ANPD National Preceptor Practice Study (Harper et al., in review)

Warren and Harper (2017) conducted a nursing professional development (NPD) role delineation study and identified seven roles of NPD practitioners, which informed the *Nursing Professional Development: Scope and Standards of Practice* and were incorporated into the NPD Practice Model (Harper & Maloney, 2016). These roles were further validated in a 2020 study, “Exploring Current and Future Nursing Professional Development Practice” conducted by Maloney and Harper (in press).

The preceptor roles identified in the Ulrich Precepting Model align closely with NPD roles, as shown in the table.

Table. Comparison of NPD Practitioner and Preceptor Roles

NPD Practitioner Roles (Harper & Maloney, 2016)	Preceptor Roles/Responsibilities (Ulrich, 2019)
Learning facilitator	Teacher/coach; facilitator
Change agent	n/a
Mentor	Role model
Leader	Leader/influencer
Partner for practice transitions	Socialization agent; protector
Champion for scientific inquiry	Evaluator
Advocate for the NPD specialty	n/a

ANPD Position

Precepting is not recognized as a nursing specialty. However, precepting shares commonalities with nursing professional development that should be examined through rigorous research. Serving as a preceptor is often an entry into the specialty practice of nursing professional development—an ANA recognized specialty in which certification is available. ANPD recognizes the value of preceptors and supports their practice through research and recognition.

References

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