TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING
3.7.2.a. Education Guideline
Meeting Program of Study Objectives through Clinical Learning Experiences
Revised 09/02/2022

The definition of clinical learning experiences for both vocational and professional nursing education programs guides nursing programs to understand that the clinical learning experiences are:

- **faculty-planned and guided** learning activities;
- designed to assist students to **meet** the stated **program and course outcomes;**
- designed to assist students to **safely apply knowledge and skills** to clients across the life span; and
- appropriate to the expectations of the graduates (according to program type).

Clinical learning experiences may occur in:

- **actual patient care** clinical learning situations;
- associated **clinical conferences**;
- nursing skills and computer **laboratories**;
- **simulated clinical settings**, including high-fidelity where planned objectives are guided by trained faculty in a realistic patient scenario and following by a debriefing and evaluation of student performance.

- Please note: Clinical practice with real patients in settings where patients receive nursing care IS NOT an option, but a requirement.

The clinical settings for faculty supervised hands-on patient care include:

- **acute care** and **rehabilitation** facilities;
- **primary care** settings;
- **extended care** facilities (long-term care and nursing homes);
- **residential care** settings,
- **respite** or **day care** facilities;
- **community** or public health agencies, and
- other settings where **actual patients** receive nursing care.

Rule 214.9(c)(3) for vocational nursing education and Rule 215.9(c)(4) for professional nursing education state that hours in clinical learning experiences shall be sufficient to meet program of study requirements with a rationale for the ratio of contact hours assigned to classroom and clinical learning experiences. The suggested ratio is one (1) contact hour of didactic to three (3) contact hours of related clinical learning experiences.

When determining the required clinical assignments and clinical hours, it is important to ensure that students achieve the clinical objectives and demonstrate the essential competencies for each clinical course. Clinical practice settings are a scarce and valuable commodity, a fact that

validates the need for a focus on quality clinical time and experiences in all settings. The highest-rated skills needed by new nurses are clinical judgment, communication, and active listening and these qualities may be best learned in hands-on patient care areas.

A frequent question to Board Staff is "How many hands-on hours shall we require in our program?" The following table provides NEPIS data from 2019, 2020, and 2021 surveys and offers parameters for average hours in **hands-on clinical experiences***:

Program Type	Mean Number of Hours in Hands-on Clinical Practice	Median Number of Hours in Hands-on Clinical Practice	Minimum Number of Hours in Hands-on Clinical Practice	Maximum Number of Hours in Hands-on Clinical Practice
VN Programs	2019 569 2020 549 2021 442	2019 640 2020 560 2021 432	2019 225 2020 176 2021 96	2019 898 2020 1036 2021 1208
LVN to ADN	2019 398 2020 390 2021 314	2019 384 2020 384 2021 306	2019 248 2020 248 2021 172	2019 560 2020 560 2021 560
ADN	2019 575 2020 580 2021 448	2019 560 2020 550 2021 474	2019 384 2020 240 2021 60	2019 953 2020 2080 2021 800
BSN	2019 640 2020 616 2021 557	2019 620 2020 596 2021 560	2019 345 2020 28 2021 21	2019 936 2020 1074 2021 1763

*Some numbers reflect restrictions in hours posed by the pandemic. 2022 data may be more realistic for a post-pandemic schedule.

Note: The recorded hours are separate from clinical learning experiences in computer-generated scenarios, nursing skills lab practice, and high-fidelity simulation activities.

Factors to be considered by nursing education programs in planning the most effective use of clinical learning experiences to fulfill program objectives and to prepare students to demonstrate the *Differentiated Essential Competencies of Graduates of Texas Nursing Programs (DECs) include:*

- Practice in the nursing skills laboratory is a beginning arena to learn and to perfect skills and procedures through repetitive demonstration.   However, practice in the nursing skills laboratory is an ongoing activity where students can work on advancing their skill repertoire as well as reviewing skills previously learned. It also provides a setting for remediation when students need additional assistance with nursing skills.

- Participation in simulation experiences allows students the opportunity to experience patient scenarios, implement nursing skills, and make nursing decisions. The high-fidelity simulation laboratory allows the student a safe environment in which to experience the consequences of nursing actions without posing harm to patients. Though simulation experiences can vary in level of sophistication, it is essential that they are faculty-planned and directed, and that valuable feedback is provided to the students. Simulation also offers opportunities for students to practice handling patient situations they may not otherwise encounter in their student role.

- Faculty-supervised hands-on patient care is the most valuable clinical experience for nursing students, but the value is enhanced by practice in the skills lab and simulation experiences. Students entering the patient care setting having a skills set learned in the nursing skills lab and decision-making abilities enhanced by the simulation experience will be more confident and ready to provide safe nursing care to their patients. Faculty may continue to find new learning experiences for the students as the clinical day progresses.

- Pre- and post-conferences offer an opportunity for students to reflect on their own and their peers' nursing care experiences. Through discussions in the clinical group, students' learning will advance as they apply current didactic content to the clinical setting.

- Computer-driven clinical learning may provide another avenue for applying nursing knowledge to a patient situation. However, these seem less effective modes of learning about clinical practice unless they have faculty involvement.

- All clinical assignments and activities should be planned to meet the clinical objectives.