



MINNESOTA BOARD OF NURSING

2829 University Avenue SE #500
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414-3253
(612) 617-2294

MN Relay for Hearing /Speech Impaired Only: 1-800-627-3529

Report of Nursing Service and Nursing Education Cooperative Summer 2003 Clinical Elective Nursing Student Internship Course

In November 2002, the Minnesota affiliate of Colleagues in Caring initiated a roundtable discussion with representatives from clinical agencies and the Board of Nursing. The purpose of the discussion was to identify regulatory issues regarding summer employment opportunities for nursing students that maximize learning and the development of competence.

Board staff explained that Minnesota Statutes, sections 148.171 through 148.285, commonly referred to as the Nurse Practice Act, govern the practice of nursing in Minnesota. Basically, the law provides the Minnesota Board of Nursing must license any individual who practices professional or practical nursing in Minnesota. However, the law does provide for certain exemptions from the licensure requirement.

Minnesota Statutes, section 148.271, provides an individual may practice nursing in Minnesota, without a Minnesota nursing license, in specific situations. Paragraph (7) states the Nurse Practice Act does not prohibit “professional or practical nursing practice **by a student practicing under the supervision of an instructor while the student is enrolled in a nursing program** approved by the board under section 148.251.” Further, paragraph (4) states the Nurse Practice Act does not prohibit “the provision of nursing or **nursing-related service by a nursing assistant** who has been delegated the specific function and is supervised by a registered nurse or monitored by a licensed practical nurse.” (emphasis added)

The scope of practice by a **student practicing under the supervision of an instructor** while the student is enrolled in a nursing program is not restricted in the statute; however, in Minnesota Statutes section 148.171, subdivision 12, the scope of practice for the nursing assistant is limited by the definition that a “nursing assistant means an individual providing nursing or nursing-related services **that do not require the specialized knowledge and skill of a nurse**, at the direction of a nurse.” The Board interprets these provisions to mean that individuals, who happen to be nursing students, may be employed as unlicensed assistive personnel and must function within the scope of practice of that category as provided in the law.

In response to the limitations to scope of practice when a nursing student is employed and not enrolled in a formal nursing course, a group of representatives from clinical agencies and professional nursing education programs developed guidelines for an elective clinical internship course. Based on these guidelines, a number of clinical agencies and professional nursing education programs participated to offer a pilot clinical internship opportunity during summer 2003. Qualified students selected and applied for a summer clinical internship with a participating clinical agency. Once accepted into the clinical internship program, the student applied for admission to a clinical internship course offered by one of the participating nursing education programs.

Because this was a pilot project, representatives from the service agencies and professional nursing education programs met in September 2003 to begin the process of evaluating the summer employment clinical internship program. A summary of the preliminary evaluation data follows.

Seven baccalaureate nursing education programs and one associate degree nursing education program participated with approximately 7 clinical agencies to offer the elective clinical course. Approximately 70 junior

level nursing students enrolled in the courses. Three students were in an associate degree program with the remainder of the students enrolled in baccalaureate programs.

From the educational perspective, students enrolled in the courses evaluated their summer work experience positively; students not able to participate in the program reported they were disappointed in their summer work experience. Faculty from each of the programs reported they plan to initiate student focus groups during fall semester to officially evaluate the internship experience.

From the perspective of the clinical agencies, participants agreed that students enrolled in the formal educational internship program versus students employed but not participating in the educational program had a much broader experience in relation to the total scope of practice of the professional nurse. For summer 2004, many of the service agencies reported they will only employ students enrolled in a clinical internship experience.

Most clinical agencies had students from more than one educational program; one clinical agency had 37 students from fifteen schools and six states. This experience initiated a request to educators to develop some standardized documents such as preceptor evaluation forms and to consider standardizing some of the requirements. Additionally, clinical agency participants suggested reducing the tuition that students must pay for the course, though some clinical agencies paid students' tuition.

Consensus of preceptors was the experience promoted growth in their scope of practice by challenging them to model evidence-based practice as well as to provide rationale for their clinical judgments. Suggestions from preceptors for improvement in the experience included assigning a lighter patient assignment to preceptors when nursing students begin the work experience. Even though students were not counted in the staffing grid, it took additional time at the beginning of the work experience to help students orient to the practice environment.

From the perspective of the Board of Nursing, students demonstrated accountability for understanding and making decisions about summer employment based on the Minnesota Nurse Practice Act. During spring semester 2003, students were given a fact sheet explaining their status and scope of practice depending upon whether or not they were enrolled in a formal course in an approved nursing program. Board staff received many calls prior to and during the summer employment season regarding students' assertiveness in specifying that they could only "practice professional nursing" if they were officially enrolled in a nursing course in an approved nursing program. Board practice staff received fewer calls this summer from staff nurses questioning the scope of practice of nursing students employed during the summer.

As a cooperative endeavor, the consensus of participants from Colleagues in Caring, board staff, service agencies, and educational programs is the project brought service and education together in a way that benefited students. Participants reported they will offer the summer internship collaborative program during summer 2004. Finally, the group plans to develop a formal evaluation process, collect data, and analyze the data to determine the impact of the internship experience on the competence of the beginning entry professional nurse