Welcome to the NR-435: Community Health Nurse practicum experience.

As you begin preparing for your practicum experience, I want you to be aware that the required assignments have been developed to facilitate learning and the expansion of your knowledge base, providing evidence of development toward your professional goal. Review your syllabus very carefully and discuss milestones with your practicum preceptor and instructor to avoid missing a deadline.

Enjoy your practicum experience and take advantage of every opportunity to apply your new knowledge and skills.

Sincerely,

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Practicum Guidelines & Procedures

I. General Guidelines

The NR-435: Community Health Nursing course offers you an opportunity to apply and to relate theoretical content to real practice situations. Prior to this unique practicum course, you have mastered an understanding of theoretical foundations of community health nursing. This concentrated professional experience will help to further prepare you for a role in community health nursing. On a larger scale, it allows you to enhance your skills in communication, teamwork, critical thinking and professionalism.

You are responsible for identifying a potential location and preceptor a minimum of 120 days prior to the beginning of the course. Students are assisted in this effort by a practicum coordinator. You must select a bachelor’s-prepared nurse preceptor with experience in community health nursing to provide guidance and direction for attainment of your learning outcomes and goals. Additionally, you must have an active and unrestricted license in the state where the practicum will be completed. In the event you are completing the practicum in a non-resident state, proof of current RN licensure will be required.

In concurrence with your assigned faculty member, a learning agreement including expectations, learning outcomes and means of measuring success will be executed. During the practicum, you must advise your preceptor of course requirements and personal learning objectives. Each assigned faculty member is responsible for evaluating your performance and all associated assignments completed during the practicum experience. You are responsible for making travel arrangements and incurring all related expenses.

You are responsible for scheduling and completing a minimum of 96 hours of practical experience in an approved and supervised setting for community health nursing. The scheduled hours will be arranged in conjunction with the practicum site to satisfy the practice experience requirement. Chamberlain allows flexibility in scheduling these hours. The requirement may be met with full days, partial days or consecutive days as agreed upon with the preceptor. The Practicum Log must be submitted to the instructor. Documentation must demonstrate activities related to course outcomes, specialty competencies and your learning agreement.

You will also participate in an online practicum class that will include weekly assignments and discussion threads in addition to their practicum hours. The majority of the practicum experience should include direct and indirect care practice interactions. A marginal amount of time should be spent gathering evidence for graded assignments. Time completing (writing) cannot be included in the 96 hours of practicum.

You are also responsible for scheduling and completing 96 hours of practicum experience at the pre-approved site during the NR-435 course session. At least 60 hours should be spent in direct care situations.

The remaining 36 hours can be spent in:

- Research and preparation for practicum experience
- Research and preparation for assignments, projects and committee meetings
- Presentations
- Attendance and participation at committee meetings
- Reflection of experience via Practicum Log under the guidance of your preceptor

All hours must be documented on the Practicum Log and signed off by the preceptor. Travel time to and from the practicum site cannot be included in the 96 hours.

II. Eligibility for Practicum

1. Prerequisite Requirements

- Completion of all required RN to BSN nursing courses except the NR-451: RN Capstone (NR-361: Information Systems in Healthcare for students in the RN-BSN to MSN option).

2. Practicum Site Selection

- You must take a proactive role in this process to assure that an acceptable site is found. Begin the process by identifying your own learning goals then after identifying these goals initiate the process of selecting a site that provides the best opportunity.

Site Requirements

The site may request various requirements from you. It is your responsibility to ensure you understand all site requirements and complete them prior to the beginning of the practicum. The site may require various healthcare compliance requirements such as background check, etc. You will receive this information from your practicum coordinator as soon as they are able. A contract may also be required by your practicum site. Your coordinator will facilitate this and let you know if any additional assistance is needed. Once your site contract and compliance, if needed, are complete, your coordinator will register you.
The site may also require an agreement or contract between Chamberlain and the site. This process can take several weeks to secure; therefore, it is important that you identify any contractual requirements as well as assist in securing the correct information in a timely manner. The practicum coordinator is available to assist with contractual agreements.

All agreements must be completed prior to the beginning of the practicum course and course registration. In the event an agreement is not completed, a delay in starting the practicum will occur.

3. Completed Practicum Application

Once the site has been selected and the preceptor identified:

• Complete the Practicum Application at least 120 days prior to the beginning of the practicum course
• Identify the preceptor and include the preceptor’s CV and licensure in the application

NOTE: The preceptor’s resume is to be submitted along with the Practicum Application.

The Practicum Application should be sent to the practicum coordinator, along with the preceptor’s resume. The online application is located on the Chamberlain Student Portal at my.chamberlain.edu.

4. Ethical Behavior

You are expected to demonstrate professional demeanor, behavior, appearance and communication at all times. You are bound by the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics and must agree to abide by all the rules and regulations of the state in which you are practicing.

III. Roles & Responsibilities

1. Faculty Role

During the course, the instructor should be available via email or telephone to provide support to you and the preceptor. It is incumbent upon the instructor to assure that the site is not misappropriating your time and/or utilizing you as it would a full-time employee, but instead is facilitating learning. Given the nature of the practicum, the role of the instructor becomes a combination of facilitator, organizer, professional relations coordinator, role model, coach and counselor. The instructor’s role is to maintain ongoing and effective communication throughout the practicum experience. The instructor is responsible for the final evaluation of your learning. Upon completion of the practicum, the faculty will complete a preceptor evaluation.

2. Responsibilities of Chamberlain University

• Ensure you have met all eligibility requirements prior to beginning the practicum
• Define competencies to be addressed during practicum assignment
• Suggest activities to enhance the educational experience

• Provide a faculty member to act as instructor and facilitator
• Ensure you to abide by practicum facility policies and procedures, rules and regulations
• Consider promptly any complaints by you, your preceptor or representatives of the facility
• Maintain communication with you and your preceptor during the assignment
• Agree not to discriminate by race, creed, color, religion, sex or national origin
• Evaluate your academic performance in the course

3. Responsibilities of the Practicum Coordinator

• Assist in student efforts to secure a practicum site and preceptor
• Make contact with the site and confirm all required compliance forms
• Partner Development coordinator will confirm agreement and verify all needed requirements are in place with the site prior to practicum registration
• Be a conduit if preceptor changes are requested by you
• Follow up with you, preceptors and faculty about the overall practicum experience upon the completion of the course

4. Responsibilities of the Practicum Preceptor

• Cooperate with Chamberlain faculty to promote your success in the practicum
• Orient you to the facility environment and policies
• Design suitable experience situations as described in the course outcomes and student learning agreement
• Serve as mentor for your professional development
• Participate in initial conference call with you and practicum course instructor during the first week of the course
• Refuse to pay students for practicum or use students to replace paid staff
• Provide constructive feedback about your performance in the practicum setting
• Not disclose any personal, student-identifying information or records of your participation except as set forth by an agreement or required by law
• Agree to not discriminate by race, creed, color, religion, sex or national origin
• Respond to practicum course faculty requests for updates during Weeks 4 and 7 as to your progress
• Provide feedback to Chamberlain as requested
• Verification of student hours on Practicum Log and Learning Agreement (preceptor signature required)
• Complete a final student evaluation based on the course outcomes
5. Your Responsibilities as a Student

• Meet eligibility and course requirements
• Be familiar with all procedures and content for practicum experience
• Meet deadline dates for all practicum coursework and activities
• Assist in the facilitation of an initial meeting between you, the practicum course instructor and preceptor during the first week of your practicum
• Demonstrate competence in practicum assignments
• Abide by facility rules and regulations
• Conduct yourself in a professional manner during the practicum assignment
• Accept instruction from facility personnel as a learning opportunity
• Maintain communication with course faculty
• Comply with all facility requirements (e.g., liability insurance, background screening, physical examination, drug screening and current immunizations)
• Evaluate the practicum experience
• Fund all travel arrangements and any associated expenses
• Provide proof of active and unrestricted licensure if requested
• You may engage in patient care as part of the practicum experience. You may teach patients; you may observe the preceptor doing practicum teaching or patient care and may participate in pre-practicum conferences and post-practicum debriefings.

Location for practicum experience

• RN to BSN students may have working relationships in the field and may use their networks to determine a location for completing the practicum.
• Students may identify a learning need that is outside of their network and may need assistance in learning about a potential practicum site. The practicum coordinator will assist students in exploring opportunities in their area. The practicum coordinator can be reached at practicumcoordination@chamberlain.edu.
• It is important to remember the practicum gives facilities the opportunity to observe the student as a potential employee. Therefore, students may consider employment goals in selecting a site.

Criteria for site selection

• The site must offer the student a community health nursing opportunity. Some of the roles considered are home health nursing, parish nursing, working in various areas of the health department, correctional nursing and school nursing.

  – **Please note:** For California and Minnesota students seeking a certificate in public health nursing, the site criteria is limited to public health settings. Examples include, but are not limited to health departments, parish nursing, governmental agencies, schools and non-profit organizations that provide services to vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and those who are homeless. These examples serve as a guide and are not all encompassing. Each application and site is reviewed on a case by case basis based on the public health scope of practice standards. Practicum requirements are set by each state’s board of nursing. Approvals are based on meeting of their criteria as well as Chamberlain University’s.

• The site may be in the institution where the student is currently employed, but must be outside of the normal work area (e.g., student may be a hospital staff nurse in the cardiac unit and may select a preceptor who is the director of the Home Health department in the same hospital).
• Students may engage in patient care as part of the practicum experience. Students may teach patients; students may observe the preceptor doing practicum teaching or patient care and may participate in pre-practicum conferences and post-practicum debriefings.
• Students must have an active and unrestricted nursing license in the state where they wish to complete the practicum. For students who are completing their practicum in a different state from where they reside, proof of proper nurse licensure will be required prior to their practicum registration.
II. Practicum Hours Requirement

Students are responsible for scheduling and completing a minimum of 96 hours of practical experience in an approved and supervised setting for community health nursing. The scheduled hours will be arranged in conjunction with the practicum site as is reasonable to satisfy the practice experience requirement. Chamberlain allows flexibility in scheduling these hours. The requirement may be met with full days, partial days or consecutive days as agreed upon with the preceptor.

All hours must be documented on the Practicum Log and signed off by the preceptor. Travel time to and from the practicum site cannot be included in the 96 hours.

III. Preceptor Qualifications

- Holds a bachelor’s degree in nursing from an accredited school of nursing
- A minimum of two years of experience as a C/PHN
- Holds a position in community/public health nursing
- Certification in public or community health nursing recommended
- Strong communication skills
- Reliable internet connection

NOTE: Preceptor cannot be a relative or family member. In addition, the preceptor cannot be a direct supervisor or any staff member who can impact the employee evaluation.

IV. Responsibilities of the Practicum Preceptor

- Cooperate with Chamberlain faculty to promote student success in the practicum
- Orient the student to the facility environment and policies
- Design suitable experience situations as described in the course outcomes and student learning agreement
- Serve as preceptor for students in professional development
- Participate in initial conference call with student and practicum-course instructor by week 2 of the course
- Refuse to pay students for practicum or use students to replace paid staff
- Provide constructive feedback to students about their performance in the practicum setting in a timely manner
- Not disclose any personal, identifying information or records of students’ participation except as set forth by an agreement or required by law
- Agree to not discriminate by race, creed, color, religion, sex or national origin
- Respond to practicum course faculty requests for updates during Weeks 4 and 7 as to the progress of the student
- Provide feedback to Chamberlain as requested
- Verification of student hours on Student Activity Log and Learning Agreement (preceptor signature required)
- Demonstrates professionalism in all interactions and communications between RN to BSN student and Chamberlain University faculty
- Serves as a professional role model for RN to BSN student

V. Course Requirements

The syllabus and other documents in this handbook outline course requirements that students must submit to complete the course. The two graded components that demand the most time and preparation are:

Learning Agreement

The student is responsible for the construction of a Learning Agreement that includes the following:

- Name, credentials and contact information of preceptor
- Student-defined practicum goals, methods planned to meet these goals and how each goal was met. Areas of concentration include:
  - Application of nursing theory
  - Critical judgment
  - Professional development
  - Personal development
  - Human caring/diversity
  - Ethical/Legal principles
  - Leadership
  - Evidence-based practice
  - Communication

The Learning Agreement presents rich narrative documentation for meeting course outcomes; the initial Learning Agreement submitted in Week 1 forms the basis for the narrative. Students will add further activities each week, document hours, modify the plan to meet self-identified goals and demonstrate when and how goals were met.

VI. Evaluation of Practicum Experience

Each preceptor will be asked to complete a formal evaluation of the practicum experience; feedback is welcomed and highly valued. Preceptor comments and suggestions are a driving force to refine and improve the course. The survey will be emailed to each preceptor after the practicum completion. The survey results will then be compiled and reviewed. If you have specific items you would like to note, contact the practicum coordinator.
VII. Communication with Course Instructor

The course instructor will be available via email or telephone to provide support to the student and the preceptor. During the first week of the course, the instructor will email or phone the preceptor to answer any initial questions and set up a communication process. Please direct any further questions during the course to the instructor.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Contact Information

You may direct all questions about the practicum experience to the practicum coordinator at practicumcoordination@chamberlain.edu.

Eligibility for Practicum

1. When can I take the practicum?

Completion of all required RN to BSN nursing courses except for the capstone, NR-451.

Applying for the Practicum

2. When do I apply for the practicum?

You must complete the Practicum Application at least two sessions prior to the anticipated practicum start date. The deadline for applying for the practicum is 120 days before the practicum start date.

3. Why do I have to apply so far ahead of the practicum start date?

This allows time for Chamberlain to communicate all expectations for the practicum to you, the preceptor and the agency and to complete any agency agreements. This also allows sufficient time for you to complete any site-specific requirements such as immunizations, safety orientation, drug screening, CPR, etc.

4. Where do I find the Practicum Application?

1. Log in to student portal
2. Click on the “Practicum” tab
3. Click on “Submit new application”
4. Attach mentor credentials at the end of the application (CV and licensure)
5. Submit the application for review
6. Practicum coordinator will be in touch for next steps

You may also follow the directions at: https://www.chamberlain.edu/docs/default-source/academics-admissions/rnbsn/rnbsn-practicum-application-guide.pdf

5. How do I know if the site and preceptor I have selected will be appropriate for my practicum experience?

Check the practicum section in your student portal for updates on the application, compliance and site contract status. You can email your coordinator for updates by clicking on “Email my Coordinator” in your student portal or at practicumcoordination@chamberlain.edu

NOTE: You must have an active and unrestricted nursing license in the state where you wish to complete the practicum. If you are completing their practicum in a different state from where you reside, proof of proper nurse licensure will be required prior to practicum registration.

Site Selection

6. Can I do the practicum at the site or facility where I am employed?

Yes. You may complete the practicum at your place of employment; however, your preceptor cannot be your supervisor nor can the practicum be completed in the same department.

Preceptor Questions

7. Does my preceptor have to have a Master’s degree?

No, the minimum requirement for a preceptor is a bachelor’s degree in nursing. Your preceptor should have at least two years of experience as a community/public health nurse. The preceptor should be currently employed in that specialty area.

8. What happens if my preceptor gets sick or has to quit during my practicum?

In this event, you would notify their instructor immediately. You, the instructor and practicum coordinator would work together to find an alternative.
Mission:
To educate, empower and embolden diverse healthcare professionals who advance the health of people, families, communities and nations.

THE RN TO BSN PRACTICUM TOOLKIT

Literature
- Catalog
- Viewbook
- RN to BSN Curriculum Grid
- Academic Calendar

Forms & Worksheets
- RN to BSN Practicum Application Guide

For more information, email practicumcoordination@chamberlain.edu