



**National  
Association of  
Neonatal  
Nurses**

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**National Association of  
Neonatal Nurse Practitioners**



*A division of NANN*

# **Education Standards and Curriculum Guidelines for Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Programs**

**National Association of Neonatal Nurses**

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## **Introduction**

Since the mid 1970s neonatal nurse practitioners (NNPs), previously known as neonatal nurse clinicians, have demonstrated their value in the provision of health care to high-risk infants and their families. Requirements for education, licensure, accreditation, and certification of NNPs have been fluid, displaying wide variations among and between practice jurisdictions. NNPs have consistently delivered high-quality care and have remained committed to maintaining standards of excellence as they fulfill increasingly complex roles within the healthcare system.

NNPs are respected as professionals and have earned the trust of interprofessional colleagues as well as the populations they serve. Any profession worthy of this trust must engage in continuous scrutiny to insure that it keeps pace with the ever-changing needs of society and must be willing to revise both preparation and requirements for practice as reflected by the most current evidence. This is especially true in today's healthcare environment, where we are faced with tumultuous changes in the way we provide care.

Professional accountability begins with ensuring the quality of educational preparation of nurse practitioners. It is the responsibility of the professional organizations for advanced practice nursing (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties [NONPF]) to define the standards for graduate nursing education.

Each individual population focus within the broader category of advanced practice nursing is charged with delineating the more specific standards of education for its own members. Thus, the National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners (NANNP), a division of the National Association of Neonatal Nurses (NANN), defines the standards of education for the NNP.

This document describes the minimum standards necessary for preparation of NNPs. The third edition of NANNP's *Education Standards and Guidelines for NNP Programs* (2002, 2008), this document evidences NANNP's commitment to providing high-quality service to NNPs. These standards are intended for use in conjunction with other accreditation or review tools in the evaluation of NNP educational programs or tracks. Designing or revising programs according to the recommendations in this guideline will ensure that graduates receive the necessary preparation to function at the novice level. The guidelines may serve as a tool for the development and evaluation of new NNP programs and as a self-study manual for existing programs. The guidelines are especially valuable in today's environment, in which hospital administrators, directors, and managers replace NNPs with other providers who are not educated in the neonatal population. Given the educational components needed to produce a novice-level NNP, it is clear that filling the gaps with providers who have a generalist education—such as physician assistants and pediatricians or nurse practitioners educated in other population foci—is not in the best interest of providing high-quality, safe, and cost effective neonatal patient care.

Recognizing that NNPs are part of the larger group of APRNs, NANN and NANNP collaborate with a number of regulatory, licensing, education, and credentialing agencies to produce the most current education and curriculum standards. Without the efforts of all of these experts, APRNs would be disparate, disorganized, powerless, and lacking clear focus. In response to the expanding numbers and responsibilities of APRNs, the APRN Consensus Work Group and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) APRN Advisory Committee met in 2008

and formed the APRN Joint Dialogue Work Group. They developed an APRN regulatory model to clarify and ensure uniformity of APRN regulations. Their consensus report "defines APRN practice, describes the APRN regulatory model, identifies the titles to be used, defines specialty, describes the emergence of new roles and population foci, and presents strategies for implementation" (APRN Consensus Work Group & NCSBN APRN Advisory Committee, 2008, p. 5). In addition, the APRN Joint Dialogue Work Group illustrated a need for the establishment of a "formal communication mechanism, LACE, which includes those regulatory organizations that represent APRN licensure, accreditation, certification, and education entities" to ensure ongoing effective dialogue between all APRN stakeholders in these areas (p. 16).

According to AACN, "practice demands associated with an increasingly complex healthcare system created a mandate for reassessing the education for clinical practice of all health professionals, including nurses." In 2002 AACN convened a task force to investigate the desirability of the practice doctorate in nursing (DNP). The task force proposed doctoral-level education as an entry-level requirement for APRNs. This recommendation was approved by the AACN membership in its 2004 document, *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2006, p. 4).

AACN published *The Essentials of Nursing Education for the Doctorate of Nursing Practice* (2006) to illustrate "curricular expectations that will guide and shape DNP Education." The document outlines the "curricular elements and competencies that must be present in programs conferring the doctor of nursing practice degree...and addresses the foundational competencies that are core to all advanced nursing practice roles" (*The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice*, AACN, 2006, p. 8).

Although doctoral preparation for APRNs is a worthy goal, it is not yet clear when it will become a mandatory degree for entry-level practice. In updating their *Essentials for Master's Education in Nursing* (2011), AACN acknowledges that "Master's education remains a critical component of the nursing education trajectory to prepare nurses who can address the gaps resulting from growing healthcare needs and that...these *Essentials* are core for all master's programs in nursing and provide the necessary curricular elements and framework, regardless of focus, major, or intended practice setting" (AACN, 2011, p. 3).

Although APRNs are acknowledged as integral members of the healthcare system, there is a lack of consistency in regulations across state boundaries in the United States. The barriers to practice created by the lack of standardization are counterproductive because they exacerbate the shortage of qualified NNPs that already exists. With the release of the 2008 APRN Consensus Model, nurse practitioner (NP) organizations and educational facilities have undertaken efforts to incorporate the model's components. "Within education, NP programs have focused on changes to align educational tracks with the NP populations delineated in the model. National organizations have supported these efforts through collaborative work on the NP competencies that guide curriculum development" (NONPF, 2013, p. 5). NONPF, with representation from the major NP organizations, has developed core competencies for the six population foci described in the APRN Consensus Model. These "NP Core Competencies integrate and build upon existing master's and DNP core competencies and are guidelines for educational programs" (NONPF, 2011, amended 2012, p.1).

In conclusion, the framework for NNP education is built upon the broad standards for advanced practice nursing (AACN, 2006, 2011) and the evaluation criteria for nurse practitioner programs (National Task Force on Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012). This document reflects the consensus of the work summarized above and presented in the *Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs* (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012), *The Consensus Model for APRN Regulation* (APRN Consensus Work Group & NCSBN APRN Advisory Committee, 2008), *Population-Focused Nurse Practitioner Competencies* (NONPF, 2013), *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2006), and *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing* (AACN, 2011).

Each of the following *program standard statements* is followed by an elaboration that provides important background or a rationale for the standard. The statement of the standard is identified by bold text.

## **I. Program Requirements**

**The NNP educational program must**

- A. be a formal neonatal nurse practitioner graduate or postgraduate (either post-master’s certificate or postdoctoral) program that is awarded by an academic institution and accredited by a nursing or nursing-related accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation**
- B. be awarded preapproval, pre-accreditation candidacy, or accreditation status prior to the admission of students**
- C. be comprehensive and at the graduate level**
- D. prepare the graduate for population-focused practice in the NNP role.**
- E. be supported in its development, management, and evaluation by institutional resources, facilities, and services**
- F. prepare the graduate to be eligible to take the national NNP certification exam.**

### ***Elaboration***

Nurse practitioners are described by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) as “licensed independent practitioners who practice in ambulatory, acute, and long-term care as primary and/or specialty care providers. According to their specialty practice, NPs deliver nursing and medical services to individuals, families, and groups” (AANP, 2010).

AANP recommends that NPs complete a formal graduate education program and have a commitment to lifelong learning and professional self-development to ensure that they develop and maintain the appropriate understanding of theory and level of clinical skills. AANP clearly indicates that the graduate degree is needed for entry-level preparation and acknowledges that, although most NP programs award the master’s degree, the shift toward awarding doctoral degrees is increasing. This transition has occurred as a result of a 2004 recommendation by AACN that all advanced practice nurses be prepared at the doctoral level by 2015, “with the degree title of doctor of nursing practice, or DNP” (AACN, 2004b; AANP, 2010). However, it is unclear when the doctoral degree will be mandatory for entry-level NP practice.

According to the *Consensus Model for APRN Regulation* (APRN Consensus Work Group & NCSBN APRN Advisory Committee, 2008), all APRN education programs must undergo a preapproval, preaccreditation, or accreditation process before students are admitted. The purpose of this process is to ensure that students graduating from the program will be eligible for national certification and licensure to practice and to ensure that programs meet all educational standards before they admit students. Accredited MSN or DNP programs adding a neonatal NP track must submit a substantive change report to their accreditation body and receive a letter of change approval within the designated time period set forth by the accreditation body (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, 2014; Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, 2012).

The NNP provides population-focused health care to preterm (<37 weeks) and term neonates, infants, and children up to 2 years of age.

To implement and maintain an effective NNP program or track, there must be an adequate number of faculty, facilities, and services that support NNP students. There must be a sufficient number of faculty with the necessary expertise to teach in the NNP program. As a necessary part of the educational process, access to adequate classroom space, models, clinical simulations and audiovisual aids, computer technology and library resources is critical. When using alternative delivery methods, a program is expected to provide or ensure that resources are available for the students' successful attainment of program objectives.

Graduates of NNP educational programs should be eligible to take the nationally recognized certification exam. This national certification will assess the broad educational preparation of the individual, including graduate core, APRN core, NNP role/core competencies, and the competencies specific to the neonatal population (NONPF, 2013).

## **II. Faculty and Faculty Organization**

- A. NNP programs must have sufficient faculty members with the preparation and current expertise to adequately support the professional role development and clinical management courses for NNP practice.**
  - 1. NNP program faculty members who teach the clinical components of the program must maintain current licensure, state approval to practice as an advanced practice nurse and national certification.**
  - 2. NNP program faculty must demonstrate competence in clinical practice as a NNP and in teaching through a planned, ongoing faculty development program designed to meet the needs of new and continuing faculty members.**
- B. Non-NNP faculty members must have expertise in the area in which they are teaching.**

**C. NNP program faculty competence must be evaluated at regularly scheduled intervals.**

***Elaboration***

For successful implementation of the curriculum, faculty members must have the preparation, knowledge base, and clinical skills appropriate to the neonatal area. Recognizing that no individual faculty member can fill all roles, NNP programs need to maintain a sufficient number of qualified faculty members who have the knowledge and competence appropriate to the neonatal area and who are able to meet the objectives of the program and neonatal population–focused tracks.

NNP program faculty should include a mix of individuals with expertise and emphasis in research, teaching, and clinical practice. Although it may be difficult for some faculty members to balance research, practice, and teaching responsibilities, all faculty members are encouraged to maintain national certification. It is imperative, however, that faculty members who teach clinical components maintain appropriate professional credentialing.

NNP faculty members may participate in or undertake various types of practice in addition to direct patient care to maintain currency in practice. Maintaining this currency is important to ensuring clinical competence in the area of teaching responsibility.

In the event that a NNP faculty member has less than 1 year of clinical or academic experience, it is expected that a senior or experienced faculty member will mentor this individual in both clinical and teaching responsibilities. Mentoring new and inexperienced faculty is a positive experience that helps NNPs transition into the role of NNP faculty educator. Opportunities for continued development in one’s area of research, teaching, and clinical practice should be available to all faculty.

Similar to NNP faculty, other faculty who help support the NNP program must have the preparation, knowledge base, and clinical skills appropriate to their area of teaching responsibility.

**III. Practice Experience Requirements for Prospective Students**

**The equivalent of 2 years of full-time clinical practice experience (within the last 5 years) as a registered nurse (RN) in the care of critically ill neonates or infants in critical care inpatient settings is required *before a student begins clinical courses*. Students may enroll in preclinical courses while obtaining the necessary practice experience.**

***Elaboration***

NANN recognizes that a solid foundation of basic RN practice in a Level III and/or IV NICU is necessary before one assumes the advanced practice role of NNP. However, critical thinking skills needed for the care of the critically ill neonate/newborn (birth to 28 days of life) can be derived in a practice setting other than the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Therefore, while



the majority of experience should be in a Level III and/or IV NICU, practice experience in a critical (intensive care) inpatient setting for infants (1 to 12 months of age) may be considered.

Anecdotal experience suggests that students with at least two (2) years RN experience in the neonatal intensive care setting are more successful in transitioning to the APRN role. Although it is ideal for prospective students to complete their RN practice experience before beginning graduate education, maintaining this position may not be feasible in today's educational market. Appropriate RN experience in the care of critically ill newborns or infants is essential *prior to beginning the clinical component of an NNP program.*

#### **IV. Program Leadership**

- A. The director/coordinator of the NNP program must be a doctorally prepared, nationally certified nurse practitioner. He or she has responsibility for overall leadership of the program.**
- B. The faculty member who provides direct oversight of the NNP program must be a nationally certified NNP, preferably prepared at the doctoral level.**
- C. The program faculty member(s) must be prepared at the graduate level and must maintain currency in clinical practice, licensure, and national certification as an NNP. She or he is responsible for development of the NNP role and clinical courses.**

#### ***Elaboration***

The *program director/coordinator* must be doctorally prepared, should have a strong foundation in areas that support the responsibilities of leadership for the program (clinical knowledge, academic leadership, administration, and scholarship), and must be nationally certified in a particular NP population focus. She or he has academic oversight for the NNP program.

In programs with multiple tracks, although the program director/coordinator may be certified in only one population-focused area of practice, she or he is responsible for leadership of all of the NP tracks (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012).

The *faculty member* with direct oversight of the NNP program must be a clinically competent, nationally certified NNP with a minimum of 2 years of NNP academic and/or clinical experience. Doctoral preparation is preferable. She or he provides direct supervision for the NNP track, provides curriculum oversight for the population-focused content of the NNP education program, and participates in the identification, development, teaching, and evaluation of the population-focused content for the advanced practice nursing core (advanced physiology and pathophysiology, health assessment, and pharmacology). She or he may work in collaboration with the program director/coordinator on the graduate nursing core (e.g., theory and research). This faculty member is responsible for the selection, evaluation, and counseling of students in the program and also participates in the ongoing evaluation of the program's resources and services.

Members of the program faculty must be prepared at the graduate level and must maintain currency in clinical practice, licensure, and national certification as an NNP (AANP, 2010). These faculty members are responsible for development of the NNP role and clinical courses, and one of their primary responsibilities is the development, implementation, and evaluation of the NNP program curriculum. They should also participate in the selection, evaluation, and counseling of students and in the ongoing evaluation of the program's resources and services.

Individuals providing didactic instruction should be drawn from the interprofessional team of healthcare providers caring for infants and their families. Participants should be determined according to the resources available to the program but should generally include NNPs, neonatologists, pediatric subspecialists, APRNs, and allied health specialists. These faculty members should have the "preparation, knowledge, and skills appropriate to their content areas" (AANP, 2010). The didactic and clinical presentations of participating faculty will be tailored to the individual needs of the students under the direction of the NNP faculty.

## **V. Curriculum**

**The curriculum must be designed to provide experiences, both didactically and clinically, to meet the competencies as stated in the table on pages 19-39.**

### **A. Didactic instruction**

- 1. The curriculum must include, at a minimum, three separate graduate-level core courses in the following areas:**
  - a. advanced physiology and pathophysiology, including general principles that apply across the lifespan**
  - b. advanced health assessment, including advanced assessment techniques, concepts, and approaches**
  - c. advanced pharmacology, including pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, and pharmacotherapeutics of all broad categories of agents.**
- 2. The curriculum must include a minimum of 200 didactic clock hours.**
- 3. Specific neonatal content and/or courses related to advanced physiology and pathophysiology, advanced health assessment, and advanced pharmacology must be included and integrated throughout the other neonatal-specific didactic and clinical courses.**

### **B. Clinical instruction**

- 1. The clinical component of the NNP curriculum must include a minimum of 600 precepted clock hours with critically ill newborns or infants in the delivery room and Level II, III, and IV NICUs.**

2. **Precepted clock hours with neonates with surgical or cardiovascular disease may occur in a pediatric ICU setting and may be included in the minimum 600 hours.**
3. **While clinical experience in pediatric ICU and Level II NICUs caring for critically ill newborns is valid, the majority of the 600 precepted clock hours must be spent in Level III and IV NICUs.**
4. **Hours of observational experience may *not* be included in the minimum 600 hours.**
5. **Clinical skills, or simulation laboratory hours and clinical seminar hours, may *not* be included in the minimum 600 hours.**
6. **Clinical experiences outside of the ICU and/or delivery room (e.g., in antenatal, intrapartum, or primary care) may *not* be included in the minimum 600 hours. However, sufficient clinical experience to provide competency in the primary care component of the NNP scope of practice must be required.**

**C. Core content**

1. **The curriculum must contain sufficient content to enable program graduates to meet the core competencies and neonatal population-specific competencies for NNP practice.**
2. **Recommended population-focused content for NNP education is outlined in this document.**
3. **Formal NNP curriculum evaluation should occur every 5 years or sooner.**
4. **Postgraduate students must successfully complete graduate didactic and clinical requirements of an academic graduate NNP program through a formal graduate-level certificate or degree-granting graduate level NNP program. Postgraduate students are expected to master the same outcome criteria as graduate-degree-granting-program NNP students.**

***Elaboration***

The curriculum design of individual NNP programs is the prerogative of the program faculty. Although NANN supports the program faculty's exercise of creativity in designing the NNP curriculum, it is essential that the curriculum plan meet all current standards, evaluation criteria, and guidelines that have been iterated in this document. NNP faculty should have ongoing input into the development and revision of curriculum, progression, and graduation criteria. To ensure that students achieve successful program outcomes, program and course evaluation should be ongoing and real time with formal curriculum overview at least every 5 years.

Not all facilities care for neonates postsurgically or who have cardiovascular disease in the NICU; some provide that care in the pediatric ICU (PICU). In this situation, precepted clinical hours caring for such neonates in the PICU may count toward the minimum 600 clinical hours.

Clinical and didactic content related to primary care of the high-risk infant during the first 2 years of life must be included in the curriculum. This content should be offered in addition to the clinical and didactic hours required in the care of the high-risk neonate. This content provides necessary preparation for the NNP scope of practice. It also provides students with a more holistic perspective on practice while enhancing role diversity and career opportunities.

NPs expanding into the NNP population-focused area of practice may be allowed to challenge selected courses and experiences; however, didactic and clinical experiences must be sufficient to allow the student to master the competencies and meet the criteria for national certification as an NNP. NPs who have not practiced in the advanced practice role in a NICU must complete a minimum of 600 clinical hours.

NPs currently practicing in the NICU who are not nationally certified in the neonatal population focus must complete appropriate didactic coursework and a sufficient number of *direct patient care clinical hours* to establish/demonstrate competency. Programs must document credit granted for prior didactic and clinical experiences for individual students through a gap analysis.

## **VI. Preceptors and Clinical Sites**

### **A. Preceptors**

- 1. Preceptors for the 600 clock hours in the ICU must be master's-prepared nationally certified NPs or physicians board-certified (or seeking board certification) in their specialty.**
  - a. NP preceptors must have a minimum of 1 year full-time equivalent experience in the NP role, and have a minimum of 1-year full-time equivalent employment at the clinical site. These requirements ensure that the preceptor at a given site has both the clinical expertise and the familiarity with the site necessary to provide supervision of the NNP students.**
- 2. The preceptor-to-student ratio should be such that individual learning is optimized. Therefore, the preceptor-to-student ratio should not exceed 1:2.**
- 3. Preceptors for other clinical experiences (e.g., in antenatal, intrapartum, and primary care) must possess the clinical expertise necessary to provide safe guidance and appropriate education for the NNP students.**
- 4. Preceptors must be oriented to NNP program requirements and expectations for supervision and evaluation of the NNP students.**

**5. Preceptors must be evaluated annually for the purpose of ensuring the quality of the NNP students' learning experiences and defining preceptor relationships.**

***Elaboration***

Each student should be assigned a primary preceptor to coordinate the clinical experience. For the duration of the preceptorship, direct onsite supervision and consultation should be available from the NNP or neonatologist preceptor. The preceptor-to-student ratio should be such that individual learning is optimized. The recommended preceptor-to-student ratio may vary according to the extent of clinical responsibilities for a patient caseload. The optimal preceptor-to-student ratio differs if the preceptor is also seeing patients (1:1 if seeing own patients; 1:2 if not seeing own patients). The NNP faculty, however, has ultimate responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of students and for evaluation of the quality of the clinical learning environment (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012).

***Responsibilities of Clinical Preceptors***

1. Meet with the student prior to the preceptorship to discuss clinical objectives, schedules, and general guidelines. The preceptor should inform the student of any institutional orientation requirements. These should be completed prior to the beginning of the clinical experience.
2. Refer the student to any standardized procedures and management protocols applicable to unit management.
3. Assign an initial caseload of patients. Expansion of the caseload will depend on the evaluation of the student's readiness, knowledge, and skill level.
4. Permit the student to perform all the required management activities for assigned patients under appropriate supervision. These activities include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Participating in resuscitation and stabilization of neonates in the delivery room
  - b. Admitting patients to the nursery, obtaining the perinatal and neonatal history, performing physical examinations, developing the differential diagnosis, and proposing the initial management plan
  - c. Providing ongoing management of infants in collaboration with the preceptor and revising the management plan based on the evaluation of the infant's progress
  - d. Performing diagnostic tests and procedures as dictated by the status and needs of the patient
  - e. Responding to emergency situations to stabilize an infant
  - f. Documenting the infant's clinical status, plan of care, and response to therapy in the medical record
  - g. Evaluating the need for consultations and requesting them
  - h. Facilitating an understanding of the infant's current and future healthcare needs and providing support to parents and staff

- i. Developing discharge plans
  - j. Participating in post-discharge primary care management
  - k. Participating in high-risk newborn transport if this service is available and if permitted by hospital protocol
  - l. Providing staff development by participating in educational programs.
5. Provide direct supervision when the student is involved in patient care. The preceptor should be available on site for ongoing consultation and evaluation of the care delivered throughout the clinical experience.
  6. Review the student's documentation and make constructive suggestions for improvement.
  7. Meet with the student on an ongoing basis to discuss specific learning objectives and experiences. These meetings should focus on patient management and documentation, successful completion of procedures, comprehension of pathophysiology and management, interaction with staff and family, and role transition. Plans should be made for future learning experiences to meet the student's evolving learning needs. This information must be communicated to the NNP faculty in a timely manner throughout the clinical preceptorship.
  8. Evaluate the student. The preceptor must communicate with the student and the faculty member or program director. This should include written evaluation(s) of the student's performance furnished at specified intervals and upon completion of the preceptorship.
  9. Contact the program director or appropriate faculty member in a timely fashion with concerns or questions regarding the preceptor's ability to fulfill responsibilities or if there are problems concerning the student's performance.

#### *Responsibilities of Students*

1. Discuss specific clinical objectives, schedules, and general guidelines with the preceptor and faculty prior to the clinical rotation.
2. Provide the clinical site with the necessary documentation regarding licensure, health data, liability insurance, and educational information (curriculum vitae or résumé).
3. Observe the policies of the clinical site.
4. Adhere to the standards and scope of professional practice.
5. Communicate with the preceptor and faculty on clinical progress and learning needs.
6. Demonstrate independent learning, diagnostic reasoning skills, and the use of available resources.
7. Maintain and submit a log of clinical skills and activities.

8. Complete self-evaluations and evaluations of preceptor and clinical site as required.
9. Successfully complete the American Academy of Pediatrics/American Heart Association Neonatal Resuscitation Program prior to beginning the clinical preceptorship.

**B. Clinical sites**

**Clinical sites should be diverse and sufficient in number to ensure that core curriculum guidelines can be observed and clinical objectives can be accomplished.**

1. **Clinical sites should provide the student with the opportunity to manage a caseload of newborns and infants so they have the experiences necessary to achieve clinical competencies.**
2. **Clinical sites should provide the student with the opportunity to participate in educational activities.**
3. **Clinical sites should ensure that direct onsite supervision and consultation are available from the preceptor.**
4. **Clinical sites should be evaluated annually to ensure the quality of the NNP student's learning experiences.**
5. **Faculty and student assessments of the clinical experience should be conducted regularly and documented.**

***Elaboration***

The NNP faculty or clinical coordinator is responsible for evaluating the ability of the potential clinical sites to provide an optimal clinical experience for the student. During the clinical preceptorship, the student has no legal status as a nurse practitioner and must be supervised by an APRN or a physician.

NNP program faculty should provide oversight of the clinical learning environment, which may include but is not limited to, physical and/or virtual site visits, e-mail, and phone consultations with the preceptor and agency administrators, and the student's appraisal of the clinical learning environment. A mechanism should be in place to ensure the clinical setting provides the opportunity to meet learning objectives and to document outcomes of the clinical experiences (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012).

Additional topics that may need to be addressed prior to the beginning of the clinical preceptorship include liability insurance coverage, worker's compensation benefits, contracts or agreements between universities and clinical sites, and the relationship between the preceptor and the university. These matters must be clarified, because a wide variety in policies and

practices exists. In the case of distance-learning programs, interstate and international policies may need elucidation.

Ideally, the clinical site would have established NNP role description, advanced practice procedures, and management protocols before the student's clinical experience begins. However, this may not be possible if the preceptorship takes place in an NICU where there are no practicing NNPs. In this case the program director or faculty should be sure that this information is provided to the student in the didactic portion of the program.

### *Responsibilities of Program Faculty*

1. Develop clinical and didactic portions of the NNP program, as outlined in the section on curriculum.
2. Provide the preceptor with the program objectives, outlines of didactic material, and the student's required reading list prior to the beginning of the clinical rotation.
3. Develop an evaluation process and the necessary forms to be used for formative and summative evaluation throughout and upon completion of the clinical preceptorship.
4. Consult with the student and preceptor to provide clarification of clinical objectives, activities, specific individual responsibilities, and requirements.
5. Give final approval of the student's clinical evaluation by the preceptor of record.

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