

Clinical Guidelines & Procedures

All students must successfully complete a specific number of clinical hours – outlined in course syllabi - in order to pass the clinical nursing courses: 150, 205, 206, and 215. Students will complete the required clinical components under the direct supervision of an approved clinical preceptor. A minimum of one half of the required clinical hours must be completed by mid-term, and the remainder completed one week prior to the end of the semester.

All clinical experiences are arranged by the student in the student's home area to the fullest extent possible. Students should explore potential clinical sites in their area and begin researching possibilities early in the application process. We encourage online nursing candidates to contact the Director of Nursing or appropriate administrator of local agencies to discuss completing clinical hours at their facility.

- Students **are required** to complete a specified amount of clinical hours in an **appropriate location for each course** throughout the program for assignments related to pediatric, mental health, and medical/surgical patients.

In addition, students may need to identify sites for clinical observation assignments. Observational sites may include:

- physician office(s)
- pre-school or elementary school
- community support groups - such as Alcoholic Anonymous, adult day care
- Long term care facilities

It is the **student's responsibility** to contact agencies and seek permission to do clinical hours at an approved facility under the direct supervision of an approved preceptor. Students are to review the Clinical Agency Contract List to determine if a current agreement is on file. Students are responsible to contact a potential preceptor at the agency where they wish to complete clinical hours. The Director of Nursing, Nursing Educator or the Nurse Manager may be able to assist you in identifying an acceptable preceptor. It may prove helpful to provide a copy of the Agency/Preceptor/Student Responsibilities to nursing management.

Clinical affiliation agreements must be fully executed prior to registering for a clinical course. Students who register for a clinical course prior to receiving notice of preceptor approval and full execution of an affiliation agreement may be required to drop the course if it is determined that the delay of beginning the clinical experience will prevent the student from completing the requirements within the semester.

Transportation to clinical sites is the responsibility of the student. Students are expected to follow the agency policies regarding confidentiality, drug testing, and other professional requirements. Clinical agencies may deny student access to facilities based on information from criminal background checks.

It is understood that students who are unable to secure appropriate clinical sites or clinical preceptors will not be able to meet course objectives and must withdraw from the program.

Establishing Affiliation Agreements for Clinical Experiences

Establishing an affiliation agreement between the College and the Clinical Site is **required** by Allegany College of Maryland for the placement of any student in a clinical agency. A clinical contract must be in place for **each** clinical site used by the student.

Arrangements need to be initiated well in advance of the time of the practicum and students should begin the clinical preceptor and clinical agency approval process immediately upon acceptance into the program. Approval of clinical preceptors and clinical sites are to be finalized two (2) weeks prior to beginning each respective clinical nursing course (150, 205, 206, 215).

- For agencies with current agreements, allow 3-4 weeks for processing and approval.
- If no prior contract exists with the agency the student wishes to use for clinical practice, allow 12+ weeks to process and approve the agreement.

Initiation and submission of preceptor requests and clinical affiliation agreement forms does not imply approval. Students who enter clinical sites in a student role without confirmation that an affiliation agreement is in place and preceptor approval risk dismissal from the program.

Students must be licensed in the state where the clinical site is located if required by that state's Board of Nursing. Students are responsible for contacting the State Board of Nursing in their designated state to determine licensure requirements.

Students should review the criteria in the following sections for selecting a suitable clinical preceptor and suitable clinical agency before initiating the approval process.

Students cannot begin clinical work at an agency without faculty approval and a signed contract that has been approved by Allegany College of Maryland and the sponsoring agency.

Clinical Agency Site

Prior to submitting the Clinical Agency Agreement Request Form for a clinical learning site, several factors should be taken into consideration:

- the site supports student learning
- there is a record of safe care delivery at the site
- the site is able to handle students without disrupting patient care
- the number of students to be placed at the site is appropriate to the number of patients and care delivery
- student safety at the site is assured
- the site has an appropriate ratio of diversity in patients and staff
- the quality of preceptors is excellent at the site
- the agency is agreeable to a legal agreement being established with the Department of Nursing at Allegany College of Maryland

A clinical contract must be in place for **each** clinical site used by the student.

~ STEPS IN SECURING A CLINICAL AGENCY ~

**** This process should begin as soon as possible after acceptance into the program. It may take anywhere from 12+ weeks to secure preceptor and clinical agency agreements. ****

Step 1. Identify an agency for use as a potential clinical site.

Step 2. Review the Clinical Agency Contract List to determine if a current contract exists with the college.

Step 3. Complete and Submit the Clinical Agency Agreement Request Form to the Online Clinical Coordinator Jennifer Burriss, jburriss@allegany.edu This form must be completed by **ALL** students for each semester, even those requesting clinical hours with an agency that has a current contract.

Step 4. Clinical contracts that need established or renewed will be mailed from the Dept. of Nursing to the agency contact person listed on the request form. Therefore, it is crucial all information on the form be complete and legible.

Step 5. Student will be notified when a contract has been approved or a new request needs to be submitted to secure a clinical agency site.

Clinical Preceptor

While our LPN to RN online program is proving to be very popular, you need to do a significant amount of hands on study/work in a clinical setting to complete the degree. So how do you fill your clinical nursing requirements if your online degree school is in one state or region and you live in another?

The answer is to find a "preceptor" in your home area who can oversee the patient work you do in a hospital or other health care facility to get clinical credits. The preceptor is another professional nurse (RN) who supervises your work and is approved by your school.

Finding A Preceptor:

Getting a preceptor can be a bit tricky, depending on what area you live in. One of the issues is that the preceptor is generally not paid, which means it can take a bit of work to find one willing to give you supervision. Many nurses like to provide a helping hand to students, and also want to help because there is a shortage of nurses in many areas. In fact, you may find it much easier to get a preceptor if you are willing to commit to working at a facility after you do your clinical work there. But you should expect to spend some time looking before you find a satisfactory preceptor.

Other key tips:

- Call the education departments of hospitals in your area. Teaching hospitals in particular can often supply you with a preceptor.
- Speak to the nurse manager of the clinical unit where you will be doing clinical hours, they know who would be a good preceptor or who has filled that role previously.
- Contact your state board of nursing and see if they have a list of available preceptors in your area.
- As you speak to potential preceptors, let them know that you are willing to work "off" shifts – weekends, nights, etc. Hospitals and clinics are often short of nurses at those times, and are glad to have extra help available.

- ALL STUDENTS MUST REMEMBER THAT CLINICAL PRECEPTORS ARE NOT GETTING PAID TO PRECEPT STUDENTS! PLEASE DO NOT APPROACH THEM WITH THE ATTITUDE THAT THEY ARE THERE TO SERVE YOU.

Finally, when you talk to a person who may become your preceptor, ask as many specific questions about how he or she plans to work with you and what the expected outcome should be. This isn't a permanent relationship, but for the duration of your clinical course you will be working with this person one-to-one. Try to make sure you're both on the same page, as it can help you avoid potential personality conflicts.

Students are responsible for finding appropriate clinical preceptors. Preceptors must be employed in clinical agencies with signed, current clinical agreements made between Allegany College of Maryland and the clinical agency's board of directors or executive officer authorized to sign on behalf of the agency's governing body.

Clinical preceptors must supervise the students to insure that they follow the programs policies as well as the policies and procedures of the respective clinical facility. Clinical preceptors are to function as a resource person, instructor and supervisor to the nursing student. The ultimate responsibility for the patient lies with the clinical preceptor.

Preceptors must be readily available as a resource to students at all times and must supervise all student procedures, review all documentation and maintain two-way communication throughout the assigned shift with the student.

Student's clinical education activities are a learning experience for the student. The student is not to be substituted for staff members.

PRECEPTOR QUALIFICATIONS

A preceptor will have the following minimum qualifications:

1. A baccalaureate or higher degree in nursing from an accredited institution is preferred.
(*State of Delaware requires BSN preceptor)
2. Current unencumbered licensure as a registered nurse in state where clinical will be completed
3. A minimum of 2 years experience as a registered nurse
 - i. At least one (1) year experience in the area of clinical specialty for which the preceptor is being used is preferred
 - ii. National certification in specialty area is preferred
4. Willingness to work closely with ACM faculty
5. Willingness to participate in the evaluation of the student
6. Demonstrates expertise in nursing leadership and management
7. Recommendation of the nurse manager or immediate supervisor

Note: Regulations may vary with the geographic location where the student will be doing the preceptorship or clinical practicum.

Preceptors may NOT be:

1. **A relative of the student.**
2. **An immediate supervisor of the student.**
3. **An employee of the student.**
4. **A co-worker of the student.**
5. **In any other role that could present a conflict of interest.**

****Preceptors must complete all paperwork and approved by before any student can start hours****

~ STEPS IN ESTABLISHING A CLINICAL PRECEPTOR~

**** This process should begin as soon as possible after acceptance into the program. It may take anywhere from 12+ weeks to secure preceptor and clinical agency agreements. ****

Step 1. Student is to read the Student and Preceptor Roles and Responsibility criteria.

Step 2. Identify and speak to potential preceptor. Provide a copy of the Preceptor Guidelines for the proposed preceptor to review.

Step 3. Submit the Clinical Preceptor Request Form. This form should be scanned and emailed to the Online Clinical Coordinator at jburriss@allegany.edu. A separate form will be needed for EACH Preceptor. Clinical hours with direct patient contact requiring an approved preceptor are listed on the form as follows:

note some community experience facilities may also require an established clinical agreement.

Basic Medical/Surgical = 80 hours

Psychiatric/Mental Health = 40 hours

Pediatrics = 40 hours

Advanced Medical/Surgical with leadership = 120 hours

Step 4. Print the Preceptor Nurse Manager Forms.

- 1) Preceptor Assessment Form/Nurse Manager Assessment,
- 2) Fax – 301-784- 5106 or email jburriss@allegany.edu

****Students should NOT submit these documents – students are accountable to follow up with the nurse manager to ascertain forms were completed and sent to the Dept. of Nursing.**

Step 5. Print the Clinical Preceptor Forms.

- 1) Clinical Preceptor Letter of Agreement
- 2) Clinical Preceptor Professional Profile/CV
- 3) Preceptor Guidelines

Provide the forms to the proposed preceptor and ask them to complete and return the forms within 10 business days to the attention of the Online Clinical Coordinator by one of the following:

- 1) Fax – 301-784- 5106 or email jburriss@allegany.edu

****Students should NOT submit these documents – students are accountable to follow up with the preceptor to ascertain forms were completed and sent to the Dept. of Nursing.**

Step 6. Approved Preceptors will be contacted by the Department of Nursing and be provided a Preceptor Orientation, information on the course including clinical objectives and evaluation criteria, and contact information for the course faculty.

Step 7. Student will be notified when the preceptor has been approved or a new preceptor agreement needs to be completed.

Deviations from Standard Affiliation Agreement

Any deviation from the standard affiliation agreement (most often proposed by the clinical site) must first be reviewed and approved by the Vice President of Instructional Affairs at Allegany College of Maryland. This may become a lengthy process requiring up to eight (8) weeks for completion. Students needing to establish a new clinical site must allow adequate time for the process to be completed – so commence the process immediately.

Review of Affiliation Agreements

Affiliation contracts on file are reviewed annually.

****I have read and understand the clinical guidelines and procedures. I acknowledge that if any clinical time/hours are completed without all necessary approvals from the online clinical coordinator and course faculty, I will be dismissed from the program and not permitted to apply for readmission.****

Student: Name (print) _____

Sign: _____

Date: _____