

ACHA Guidelines

Scope of Practice for the Registered Nurse in College Health

Introduction and Guiding Principles

The American College Health Association (ACHA) supports and recognizes the need for hiring well-qualified college health nurses to provide cost-effective nursing care and services within institutions of higher education. With the discontinuation of a national exam certification by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), ACHA appointed a task force to study the process to recognize college health nurses and develop professional standards of college nursing practice. Leveraging the results of past collaboration with ANCC on alternative approaches to college health nurse recognition, the ACHA College Health Nursing Competencies Recognition Task Force developed the following guiding principles and standards of practice. The knowledge, skills and abilities set forth in these standards describe the scope of practice of registered nurses in college health. In addition to guiding the college health nurse, this information may also be used by administrators in need of clear definitions of nursing roles and responsibilities to assist in the recruitment and retention of nurses that work in health care centers within institutions of higher education.

Nursing Practice

ACHA embraces the following description and expectations for nursing as set forth by the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN):

The ANA describes nursing as “the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations” (2014).

In 2012 the ANA endorsed a position statement from the AAACN. It is the position of the AAACN that:

- Registered Nurses (RNs) enhance patient safety and the quality and effectiveness of care delivery and are thus essential and irreplaceable in the provision of patient care services in the ambulatory setting.
- RNs are responsible for the design, administration, and evaluation of professional nursing services within an organization in accordance with the framework established by state nurse practice acts, nursing scope of practice, and organizational standards of care.
- RNs provide the leadership necessary for collaboration and coordination of services, which includes defining the appropriate skill mix and delegation of tasks among licensed and unlicensed health care workers.
- RNs are fully accountable in all ambulatory care settings for all nursing services and associated patient outcomes provided under their direction. (American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing, n.d.)

Types of Nursing Positions

Positions in college health nursing can range from administration to staff positions and encompass generalists to specialists (e.g., certification in college health nursing). Licensed nursing personnel also hold different levels of educational preparation, diploma, associate, bachelors, masters and doctoral. All licensed nursing personnel must hold a current license to render nursing care within their respective state of employment. Regardless of educational preparation, all qualified nurses should be competent in conducting health needs assessments for their assigned community; selecting priority health issues and measuring nursing objectives; designing and

implementing evidence-based nursing interventions and actions for plans of care; evaluating the effectiveness of these identified actions; and reporting patient-focused/learning outcomes (Butler, 2002, pp. 141-152).

Types and Purposes of Campus Health Centers

Most institutions of higher education across the nation offer some form of student-focused health care service. Campus health care centers range from first aid centers to comprehensive health centers with specialty medical care. In addition, there are several models of campus health services available, e.g., primary care, ambulatory care, urgent care and acute/emergent care (Perez, 2011, p. 33)

In the ANA “Scope and Standards of College Health Nursing Practice” the mission of college health nursing is to enhance students’ higher education experience by modifying and removing health-related barriers to learning, promoting optimal wellness, enabling individuals to make informed decisions about health related concerns, and empowering students to be self-directed and well informed consumers of health care services. (Butler, 2002, pp. 142-143).

Nurses working in college health are active, energized health professionals with a unity of purpose – to advance the health and learning of our nation’s students. The approaches to achieving this purpose are as diverse as the models of health centers. Whether the student receives health support from a single-room nurse-directed program or from a multi-staffed, multi-building environment, campus health centers focus on improving and advancing the health of students (Perez, 2011, p. 35).

The Nursing Process

According to the ANA, “the common thread uniting different types of nurses who work in varied areas is the nursing process -- the essential core of practice for the registered nurse to deliver holistic, patient-focused care” (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2014b). The nursing process is cyclical and on-going and can end at any of the below stages if the identified problem is solved. It is goal-directed and patient-centered and always in collaboration with the patient (ANA, 2014b).

The ANA lists the following stages of the nursing process:

Assessment

“An RN uses a systematic, dynamic way to collect subjective and objective data about a patient, the first step in delivering nursing care. Assessment includes not only physiological data, but psychological, sociocultural, spiritual, economic, and life-style factors as well” (ANA, 2014b). Methods used to collect this data include – patient interview, physical examination, health/dietary history, family history, diagnostic data and observation. It is vital that a nursing assessment identifies the patient’s problem(s), risks and outcomes for enhancing health. The use of evidence-based nursing should guide assessments that support nursing diagnoses.

Diagnosis

“The nursing diagnosis is the nurse’s clinical judgment about the client’s response to actual or potential health conditions or needs” (ANA, 2014b). Nursing diagnoses are developed based on data obtained during the nursing assessment.

Outcomes/Planning

In agreement with the patient, the nurse sets patient goals (e.g., resolving conflict through counseling or managing pain through adequate medication) to address problems identified in the diagnosing phase. When there are multiple nursing diagnoses to be addressed, the nurse prioritizes diagnoses according to severity and potential for causing more serious harm. For each problem a measurable goal/outcome is then set. For each goal/outcome, the nurse selects nursing interventions that will help achieve the desired goal/outcome (ANA, 2014b).

Implementation

The nurse implements the plan of care and performs the determined interventions that were identified to help meet the goals/outcomes that were agreed upon by the patient/nurse (ANA, 2014b). Some tasks within the determined intervention may be delegated to other individuals involved in the patient’s care.

Evaluation

The nurse evaluates the patient’s progress toward achieving the goals/outcomes identified in the previous phases and documents updates in the patient’s health record. If progress towards achieving the goal is slow, or if regression has occurred, the nurse must then change the plan of care accordingly (ANA, 2014b).

The aforementioned description and expectations for nursing practice, coupled with this five-stage cyclical process, serve as tenets to college health nursing. A description of the college health nursing standards of practice is set forth herein.

College Health Nursing Standards of Practice

STANDARD 1.

Education

Knowledge:

- 1.1 Acquires the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to practice in the area of college health
- 1.2 Partakes in ongoing educational activities related to clinical knowledge and professional skills
- 1.3 Takes part in lifelong learning to keep abreast of the diverse health issues affecting college students
- 1.4 Seeks knowledge and skills appropriate to college health care systems and integrates new information and methodologies

Skills and Abilities:

- Understanding of health care systems and integration of new information and methodologies into current practice
- Application of ethical principles and codes of professional practice as established by the nurse practice act in the state in which the nurse practices
- Application of the nursing process
- Engagement in evidence-based nursing practice
- Understanding and complying with state licensure laws

STANDARD 2.

Nursing Process

Knowledge:

- 2.1 Applies the nursing process to provide developmental-level, culturally sensitive, and diverse patient-centered medical and mental health care to individuals served within the campus community
- 2.2 Collects client data
- 2.3 Analyzes the assessment data in determining a diagnosis
- 2.4 Identifies expected outcomes individualized to the client/student or group of clients/students
- 2.5 Develops a plan of care that recommends interventions to attain expected outcomes
- 2.6 Implements interventions identified in the plan of care
- 2.7 Evaluates the client's progress toward attainment of outcomes

Skills and Abilities:

- Understanding of pathophysiology
- Understanding the stages of growth development
- Application of basic nursing clinical procedures
- Incorporation of self-care, health promotion, disease prevention and wellness theories.
- Promotion of patient rights and responsibilities
- Complying with HIPAA and FERPA, privacy, and confidentiality requirements
- Utilization of patient assessment tools
- Deriving individualized attainable outcomes from the nursing diagnosis
- Leveraging campus community services

- available to college students
- Conducting history taking and a physical and mental health assessment of patients/students
- Conducting a cultural assessment of patients/students
- Provision of emergent/acute illness care
- Providing and supporting chronic illness care
- Provision of care for injuries and life-threatening situations
- Identifying and assessing health related barriers to learning

STANDARD 3.

Collegiality

Knowledge:

- 3.1 Collaborates appropriately with the individual (including the spouse, partner, or significant other), other members of the campus community, and other health care providers in providing patient care, education and continuity of care
- 3.2 Initiates relationships with the individual (including the spouse, partner, or significant other), other members of the campus community and other health care providers to provide college health services that demonstrate and support learning outcomes
- 3.3 Contributes to the professional development of peers, colleagues and others staff

Skills and Abilities:

- Application of the current state of nursing practice standards
- Understanding, promoting and supporting the patient advocacy role
- Balancing of HIPAA and FERPA privacy requirements during collaboration with others

- Promotion of patient rights and responsibilities
- Resource utilization management
- Application of learning outcome theory

STANDARD 4.

Ethics

Knowledge:

- 4.1 Evaluates his/her own nursing practice in relation to professional practice standards and relevant laws and regulations
- 4.2 Provides nursing services in a planned and organized manner to meet existing needs and identify future needs of the individual
- 4.3 Determines actions and decisions on behalf of individuals in an ethical manner

Skills and Abilities:

- Application of current state of nursing practice standards and relevant laws and regulations
- Application of administrative or departmental policies and procedures that govern nursing practice

STANDARD 5.

Collaboration

Knowledge:

- 5.1 Identifies opportunities to work with other departments within the university
- 5.2 Collaboratively participates with other members of the community in planning, identifying outcomes, implementing, assessing, and evaluating college health services and, as applicable, community health services

Skills and Abilities:

- Incorporation of the basic nursing process for the care of college students
- Development and implementation of policies and procedures to improve quality of care
- Promotion of positive patient outcomes
- Utilizing levels of prevention – primary, secondary, and tertiary -- in patient care
- Application of the principles of team building
- Use of appropriate data sources, including valid and reliable college health surveys, assessment findings, and other collateral student services data to determine retention-related health behaviors, protective and risk behaviors, as well as students' perceptions about these behaviors
- Implementing science-based effective strategies for targeted individual, group and community student health behaviors, based on valid and reliable data

STANDARD 6.
Research, Quality Improvement, and Quality of Practice

Knowledge:

- 6.1 Utilizes interventions that are substantiated by research and quality implementation activities at his/her institution
- 6.2 Systematically evaluates the quality and effectiveness of the college health nursing practice
- 6.3 Contributes to nursing and college health through innovations in theory and practice and through participation in research, and uses research findings in practice

Skills and Abilities:

- Conducting quality review of records and data to identify opportunities for improving care
- Use of appropriate indicators to monitor quality and effectiveness of nursing care
- Use of data collection tools
- Use of performance improvement tools and strategies
- Use of interdisciplinary and interdepartmental quality review teams
- Team building and consensus building skills
- Conducting on-going monitoring for improvement
- Use of research tools and theory

STANDARD 7.
Professional Practice Evaluation

Knowledge:

- 7.1 Evaluates his/her own nursing practice in relation to professional practice standards and relevant laws and regulations.
- 7.2 Participates in yearly evaluations with immediate supervisor and collaboratively creates goals for the next school year

Skills and Abilities:

- Appropriate utilization of performance appraisals
- Identification of strengths and areas of professional/practice development required
- Use of learning outcomes
- Use of self-assessment tools
- Encouraging and ensuring the use of constructive feedback

STANDARD 8.
Resource Utilization and Leadership

Knowledge:

- 8.1 Initiates leadership in coordinating multi-disciplinary care, utilizing resources and informatics effectively and providing a feedback mechanism to evaluate and re-evaluate innovative care options.
- 8.2 Identifies factors of safety, effectiveness and cost in planning and delivering client care.

Skills and Abilities:

- Use of consensus building when appropriate
- Use of feedback from multidisciplinary groups to improve delivery of care and services
- Use of goal setting as it relates to patient-centered collaborative treatment planning and establishment of personalized self-management goals
- Utilization of referral and other resources within the health care setting and campus community
- Implementation of performance improvement strategies
- Use of interpersonal communication skills for work team effectiveness

STANDARD 9.
Communication

Knowledge:

- 9.1 Offers communication through writing, publications, presentation, and participation in professional and community groups to self-promote optimal physical and mental health and well-being
- 9.2 Promotes patient activity in health wellness, health protection, and disease prevention services for individuals and groups

Skills and Abilities:

- Use of active communication skills
- Effective public speaking skills
- Incorporation of levels of prevention – primary, secondary, and tertiary – in messaging
- Use of adult learning outcomes
- Appropriately addressing health related barriers to learning
- Effectively communicating patient rights and responsibilities
- Avoidance of copyright infringement

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