
WNA Position Statement Supporting the Role of BSN Prepared RNs as Clinical Instructors

Overview

The demand for nurses in Wisconsin continues. Forecasting models about the nursing workforce indicate that by 2035 there will be a 21 percent, (-14,000) gap, and by 2040 a 25 percent (-17,100) gap between supply and demand (del Pilar Casal & Walsh, 2024). These numbers are significant to providing accessible and quality care to Wisconsin's population.

To grow Wisconsin's nursing workforce there is a documented need for more nurse educators. The key findings and recommendations from the 2021–2022 Wisconsin Nursing Education and Nurse Faculty Survey Report noted the following regarding faculty positions and vacancies:

- There were 300 fewer faculty employed in nursing programs from the prior survey.
- Filled faculty positions decreased for both full-time (881 to 686) and part-time (565 to 460) categories.
- There was a decrease in full-time vacant positions reported, but vacant positions increased for part-time faculty positions (Young et al., 2023).

A report on the status of nurse faculty from the 2022 RN Workforce Survey indicated that there were 1,150 nurse educators. A little over one-third (34.5%) of nurse faculty members noted an intent to stay in their current employment for less than 5 years, and slightly over half (56.7%) of respondents reported an intent to stay in their current employment for less than 10 years (Zahner et al., 2023). The response to the information from these surveys generated a Wisconsin governmental strategy that provides loan forgiveness dollars to nurses graduating with an MSN or higher when they commit to teaching in a Wisconsin School of Nursing for three years (Wisconsin Nurse Educator Program, 2023).

Consideration for Utilization of BSN-prepared RNs as Clinical Instructors

The legislative committee members of the Administrators of the Nursing Education in Wisconsin (ANEW) and the Wisconsin Nurses Association have been meeting to identify possible legislative and regulatory solutions for increasing the supply of nurse educators. One approach being considered is the utilization of BSN-prepared RNs to function as clinical instructors for undergraduate nursing programs.

Allowing BSN-prepared RNs to serve as clinical instructors for pre-licensure nursing students would support expanded clinical teaching capacity without compromising quality. Clinical instruction often focuses on basic nursing skills, patient care, and professionalism—areas where BSN-prepared nurses are fully competent. They frequently serve as preceptors in clinical settings performing similar roles as

clinical instructors by guiding, evaluating, and supporting nurses/students. Nursing educational programs focus on competency-based education, which means focusing on what a nurse can do rather than their academic credentials. A BSN-prepared nurse with strong clinical skills, leadership ability, and a passion for teaching can meet these expectations. In addition, they are often the primary caregivers in practice environments, making them relatable role models for students. Students benefit from instructors who are currently practicing at the bedside, bringing up-to-date and relevant clinical experience to their teaching.

The key documents that were reviewed relating to having BSN-prepared RNs work as clinical instructors for nursing schools included:

- Wisconsin Statutes, Board of Nursing Ch. 441.01(3)
- Wisconsin Administrative Code for Nursing Ch N 1 Approvals for Schools of Nursing
- The Schools of Nursing National Accrediting Bodies standards regarding utilization of faculty that address BSN-prepared RNs:
 - AACN CCNE Standards 2024
 - ACEN 2023 Program Guidelines
 - NLN CNEA – Standards for Accreditation 2023*
- Other states Boards of Nursing websites

*You can find a summary and comparison of the resources listed above in the Appendix.

Findings

1. **Wisconsin State Statute 441.01** provides for the authority of the Board of Nursing to oversee schools of nursing standards.
2. **Nursing Administrative Code N1.108 (3), Faculty** was established in 2014. Faculty standards, qualifications for nursing faculty, and faculty exceptions, including emergency exceptions, are identified.
3. All the **accrediting agencies for nursing education programs** allow for the utilization of BSN-prepared RNs as clinical instructors with a range of criteria that include:
 - hold nursing license for the state in which they are teaching
 - hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in nursing
 - hold educational qualifications as required by governing organizations and regulatory agencies
 - have significant clinical experience and are experientially qualified for their assigned roles and responsibilities
 - clinical expertise is maintained through clinical practice or other means
 - hold relevant national certification, as applicable, consistent with their assigned roles and responsibilities and for the clinical area(s) in which they teach
 - have purposeful engagement with and formal oversight by a graduate-prepared faculty member
 - only perform in the role as a clinical instructor and prohibited from teaching the didactic portion in nursing education
 - have completed relevant graduate-level courses/education units
 - are enrolled in a graduate program or are otherwise qualified
 - faculty who do not hold a graduate degree need to document or provide evidence of active and steady progression toward achieving a graduate degree in nursing or a related field within a defined timeline.

4. In reviewing **other State Boards of Nursing** websites, 12 states allow for BSN-prepared RNs to function as a clinical instructor. These states include Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas and include oversight or supervision by graduate faculty.

Recommendations

1. WNA supports amending the Nursing Administrative Code Chapter N1.108 (3) that allows BSN-prepared RNs to function as clinical instructors in pre-licensure nursing programs as reflected in national accreditation standards for schools of nursing.
2. WNA supports the schools of nursing to adhere to their accrediting agency's criteria that allow for BSN-prepared RNs to be utilized as clinical instructors.
3. WNA supports the utilization of BSN-prepared RNs to only have clinical Instruction assignments that reflect the education, training, and experience required by the accrediting agencies and NOT teach any didactic portions in the nursing education program.
4. Request the Wisconsin Center for Nursing to collect data regarding the number of BSN-prepared RNs teaching clinical from the schools of nursing by means of the Wisconsin Nursing Education & Nurse Faculty Survey.
5. Request ANEW to collect other data regarding the number of BSN-prepared RNs teaching clinical, including the number of clinical sections, partnerships or affiliations, and any other pertinent data to inform the outcomes of utilizing BSN-prepared RNs as clinical instructors in nursing programs.

References

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- Zahner, S. J., Pinekenstein, B., Henriques, J., Meress, K. B., LeClair, J., Alnuaimi, N., & Krainak, K. (2023). *Wisconsin 2022 RN workforce survey report*. Wisconsin Center for Nursing.
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