



**Guidance Statement on the Value of Clinical Activities in the Camp Setting for
Undergraduate and Graduate Nursing Curricula**

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Developed: 2024**

**Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, talent, and energy to this important work.
Many will benefit from your expertise and willingness to share.**

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Introduction

The continued growth and development of the nursing profession depends on the ability of graduates to provide care to diverse populations across the lifespan and in diverse settings. By promoting opportunities to provide care beyond the acute care setting, nursing education programs enable students to develop assessment and intervention skills and the ability to care for individuals, populations, and communities in non-traditional settings. This may include caring for clients in summer camps, day camps, and residential camps that serve large populations of youth, adolescents, and adults.

To support the expansion of nursing education opportunities in unconventional settings, the Alliance for Camp Health (ACH) has developed this guidance statement to help nursing education programs and camps collaborate to provide clinical learning opportunities for nursing students in the camp setting.

Background

The scope of a camp nurse's practice ranges from helping individual campers and staff meet their health needs to addressing camp community health needs. This involves promotion, prevention, and treatment activities. The holistic nature of camp means that in addition to caring for injury and illness concerns, there are associated mental, emotional and social health elements to address. A research study done in fall 2023 by the Alliance for Camp Health showed that respondents identified the camp nurse as being the professional that was available to respond to concerns regarding mental, emotional, and social health (MESH) needs of campers and staff (ACH, 2023 unpublished data). The same study showed that campers are experiencing increased anger, anxiety, and depression. This demonstrates the opportunity for assessing and providing support for campers with MESH needs. Camp nursing typically takes place in a unique, complex and changing environment that poses challenges to camper and staff health associated with factors such as the camp's geographic setting, its program offerings, the scope of healthcare defined by the camp's administration, and the difference between what a person can access in the home setting to support health needs as opposed to what's available at camp.

The presentation of both individual and community health needs demands a nurse who is clinically skilled in the broadest sense and capable of effective communication with a variety of people. This is readily apparent in the mix of health needs with which a camp nurse copes, often on a daily basis. There are certainly frequent individual needs: this camper has a sore throat, that one has a skinned knee, a camper is missing home, a counselor has a headache, a kitchen staff person just cut a hand on the meat slicer, and scheduled medications require attention. Some camps serve special populations: children with health concerns such as diabetes, autism, visual impairments, posttransplant, or neuromuscular disorders. But there are also camp community health needs: Are people getting enough sleep and hydration? Is there adequate attention so weather or environmental related harms are minimized? Is infectious disease mitigation being addressed?

Accomplishing the goals of camp nursing also includes advocacy. A camp nurse advocates for camp practices and policies that maintain, if not improve, the camp community's health and that of individual campers and staff while remaining sensitive to the camp's mission and values.

Although nursing programs and nursing faculty are primarily responsible for nursing curriculum, partnering with camp health care providers to engage in community-based clinical practice opportunities

can provide valuable and unique learning activities. The immersive experience of camp health services helps to support and expand academic and didactic nursing education.

The camp setting can provide nursing students with the opportunity to provide care in a more independent environment. Some camps are more rustic with a small number of nurses onsite and no internet access, while other camps may care for special needs populations and are providing tertiary support (IV therapy, dialysis, antibiotics, respiratory support) in a community-based setting. Healthcare providers in the camp setting have to consider the impact of weather, altitude, vector-borne illness, and disease outbreaks during the camp session while participating in health promotion education. Nurses engage in prevention activities throughout the camp environment, performing safety checks, and collaborating with camp directors, safety officers, and camp maintenance to address potential hazards. Health care providers have the opportunity to care and educate children and adolescents (ages 8-18) without a parent present which provides nursing students with a unique opportunity to interact with youth in a therapeutic environment.

A Unique Care Environment

The ACH believes that the camp setting offers nursing students a unique opportunity to care for a broad range of individuals which promotes assessment and intervention skills as critical for quality care.

Camp nursing may encompass opportunities to:

- improve patient experiences and promote positive outcomes
- address mental, emotional, and social health needs
- positively impact healthcare costs
- improve the well-being of campers and staff
- provide care for those who are underserved and disadvantaged
- provide care for people from both urban and rural settings
- identify healthcare inequities and disparities
- provide health education to campers and staff
- care for people from other countries/cultures (international camp staff)

Meeting Nursing Education Clinical Needs

Nursing curricula are increasingly becoming competency-based. The camp nursing practice setting can promote the development of competencies essential for all undergraduate nursing students, specifically those outlined in the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) *Clinical Judgement Measurement Model* (CJMM; NCSBN, 2023), the National League for Nursing (NLN) *Educational Competencies Model* (NLN, 2010), and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (AACN, 2021).

The CJMM provides a framework that conceptualizes the process of identifying client needs and making clinical decisions. The elements within the framework deconstruct the steps a nurse takes that leads to formulating a plan for client care and making a clinical judgment (NCSBN, 2023). The elements of the CJMM include:

- Recognizing Cues “What assessment findings matter the most?”
- Analyzing Cues “What do the assessment findings indicate?.”
- Prioritizing Hypotheses ”What should I do first?”
- Generating Solutions “What are my options?”
- Taking Action “What interventions can I implement?”
- Evaluating Outcomes “Did the interventions help?”

The National League for Nursing (NLN) developed an Educational Competencies Model (NLN, 2010) and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) updated its *Essentials* to support a competency-based model as well. Nursing programs are revising curricula to reflect competency based education (AACN, 2021). The Alliance for Camp Health (ACH) supports nursing education and provides information regarding how completion of clinical learning activities in a camp environment can support nursing programs in assisting students to meet program competencies.

NLN Program Outcomes (NLN, 2010)

The NLN published a monograph in 2010 outlining its competency model. The organization identified seven core values, six competencies, and four program outcomes applicable to all levels of nursing education.. The academic model components allow for progression, using the same outcomes that build with increasing scope and depth for higher level learners. The ACH notes that the camp environment is appropriate for students to work towards mastery of the following NLN program outcomes:

- Human Flourishing (advocacy for clients to promote personal growth)
 - LPN/LVN: Promote the dignity, integrity, self-determination, and personal growth of diverse patients, their families, and oneself to provide individualized, culturally appropriate, relationship-centered nursing care (NLN, 2010).
 - ADN: Advocate for patients and families in ways that promote their self-determination, integrity and ongoing growth as human beings (NLN, 2010).

Within the camp setting, nurses advocate for campers and staff by providing education, promoting wellness, and encouraging health promoting behaviors.

- Nursing Judgment (making judgements in practice supported by evidence that focuses on safe, quality care)
 - LPN/LVN: Make judgments in practice, substantiated with evidence, that integrate nursing science in the provision of safe, quality care for diverse patients and their families in collaboration with the health care team (NLN 2010).
 - ADN: Make judgments in practice, substantiated with evidence, that integrate nursing science in the provision of safe, quality care and promote the health of patients within a family and community context (NLN, 2010).

The camp setting fosters independent practice for nurses and nursing students. There is a growing body of knowledge related to providing care in the camp setting that is based on evidence-based

practice. Policies and protocols as well as written standing orders guide nursing practice within the camp setting. The healthcare team may include mental health professionals, physicians, nurses, wilderness first aid providers, emergency medical technicians, registered nurses, licensed practical/vocational nurses, nursing assistants, and camp administrators. Working with a diverse healthcare team broadens the student's understanding of how the construct of nursing care aligns with other health professions.

- Professional Identity (demonstrating integrity, responsibility, and ethical practices through a commitment to evidence-based practice, advocacy, and safe, quality care)
 - LPN/LVN: Articulate a unique role as a member of the healthcare team, committed to evidence-based practice, caring, advocacy, and safe quality care, to provide optimal health care for diverse patients and their families (NLN 2010).
 - ADN: Implement one's role as a nurse in ways that reflect integrity, responsibility, ethical practices, and an evolving identity as a nurse committed to evidence-based practice, caring, advocacy, and safe, quality care for diverse patients within a family and community context (NLN, 2010).

The nurse serving in the camp setting uses evidence-based practice related to patient care, population health, and environmental health to collaborate with camp leadership and to plan and provide care. Camp nurse responsibilities not only include caring for individuals and populations, but also surveying the camp environment to ensure safety.

- Spirit of Inquiry (using evidence to drive change that improves care)
 - LPN/LVN: By collaborating with healthcare team members, utilize evidence, tradition, and patient preferences in predictable patient care situations to promote optimal health status.
 - ADN: Examine the evidence that underlies clinical nursing practice to challenge the status quo, question underlying assumptions, and offer new insights to improve the quality of care for patients, families and communities (NLN, 2010).

There is active research taking place around camp health and driving care in the camp environment. Current initiatives are related to ticks and tickborne conditions, mental, emotional, and social health (MESH), medication safety, and workplace fatigue.

AACN Essentials (2021)

The *Essentials* were developed as a framework for nursing education preparation at both the entry and advanced levels to demonstrate the uniqueness of the profession of nursing. The goal of these identified competencies is to bridge the gap between education and practice and provide learners with opportunities to demonstrate attainment of the competencies essential for success as an entry-level nurse.

The ACH advocates that the camp setting provides experiences for students to advance toward attainment of specific domains of the *Essentials*. The camp setting supports the entry level nurse in various roles including advocate, provider of care, delegator, educator, and interdisciplinary team member. The camp setting may also support graduate nursing student education within specific tracks,

such as pediatrics, family, community health, and mental health. ACH encourages nursing education programs to collaborate with camps across the United States to provide clinical learning opportunities that extend the essential nursing skills around communication, collaboration, teamwork, and comprehensive care.

Examples of entry level (prelicensure) and advanced level (advanced practice) nurse competencies that can be met within a camp setting may include:

Person-centered Care

Entry Level:

- engage with campers and staff to develop caring relationships
- communicate with other professionals in the camp setting
- develop and refine assessment skill for youth and adolescents
- identify actual and potential health problems in the camp setting, demonstrate clinical reasoning skills regarding when to treat campers and staff and when they should be sent out of camp
- coordination of care of campers and staff

Advanced Level:

- Providing care to children and adolescents in a non-traditional environment,
- Considering the camp environment and environmental exposure when assessing and treating campers and staff
- Collaborating with a healthcare team (RNs, LPNs, physicians, EMTs, wilderness first aid responders) to develop plans for care, prevention, education, and safety in the camp setting

Population Health

Entry Level:

- manage the health of the camp population with consideration of the camp location and individuals served in the camp
- develop partnerships within and outside of the camp setting, including local emergency medical personnel
- identify and advocate for potential needed change policies and procedures related to camp health
- identify conditions that may lead to a disaster in the camp setting (i.e. weather)
- review the disaster plan for the camp and identify potential safety and health hazards related to the camp environment

Advanced Level:

- Managing the healthcare needs of the camp population, which includes campers, staff members, and volunteers
- Monitoring disease outbreaks, determining contributing factors
- Developing communicable disease plans
- Identifying potential hazards in the camp environment and developing mitigation plans
- Providing education to campers and staff
- Establishing partnerships with local healthcare agencies
- Responding to emergencies related to environmental conditions

Developed: 2024

- Collaborate with camp leadership to develop policies to promote the health of the camp population

Scholarship for the Nursing Discipline

Entry Level:

- identify and evaluate research related to healthcare in the camp environment
- integrate appropriate evidence-based practice that can be implemented in the camp setting

Advanced Level:

- Engage in research related to health care in the camp environment
- Identify current evidence and apply it to care in the camp setting
- Disseminate research findings to the camp healthcare and leadership communities through publications and presentations

Quality and Safety

Entry Level:

- Identify opportunities to improve the quality and safety of healthcare in the camp setting
- Participate as a member of the interprofessional team addressing potential safety concerns in the camp environment (environmental safety survey)
- Identify potential safety hazards to those working in the camp environment

Advanced Level:

- Collaborate with camp leadership and the healthcare team to analyze and implement needed improvements to camp health and safety practices
- Collaborate with local emergency preparedness agencies to plan for, evaluate, and respond to events that may impact the camp population
- Analyze health data to identify opportunities for improving camp health quality and safety, and advocating for changes in policies and processes

Interprofessional Partnerships

Entry Level:

- use different communication techniques to collaborate with other professionals within the camp setting (dining hall, maintenance, administration, activities directors)
- delegate appropriately to others within the camp setting on the healthcare team (wilderness first aid, camp trip leaders, nursing assistants etc)
- communicate effectively with the interprofessional team regarding plan of care
- collaborate with the interprofessional team to establish health goals for the camp community

Advanced Level:

- leading and evaluating the healthcare team in the camp setting which may include camp leaders, local agencies, and camp staff
- collaborating with other members of the interprofessional team which may include camp leaders, dining hall personnel, grounds staff, waterfront staff, and community agencies to create a safe camp experience

Summary

ACH encourages nursing education programs to consider collaborating with youth camp programs to provide high quality, diverse clinical learning opportunities that promote the development of desired program competencies. Effective partnerships and collaborative team-based care are the cornerstones of contemporary, safe, effective care. Camp and academic partnerships can procure high quality clinical experiences and foster a shared commitment to forming new models for innovative clinical practice.

Potential barriers include state requirements for preceptors (vary by state), time of year that camps are in session, and the potential lack of nurses available in the camp setting. More importantly, nursing students can find a renewed sense of purpose and engagement by participating in these holistic and creative clinical experiences. The students are considered an essential member of the healthcare team and are allowed to participate fully with the support and direction of the camp registered nurse. Understanding the value and need for population-based care and scholarship, camps have the capacity to demonstrate relevance for educational programs.

References

NCSBN (National Council of State Boards of Nursing) (2023). Clinical Judgment Measurement Model <https://www.nclex.com/clinical-judgment-measurement-model.page>

NLN (National League for Nursing) (2010). *Outcomes and Competencies for Graduates of Practical/Vocational, Diploma, Baccalaureate, Master's Practice Doctorate, and Research Doctorate Programs in Nursing.*

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