



# Position Statement

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## Emergency Nurse Orientation

### Description

Emergency nursing is an independent, collaborative, and specialized area of practice.<sup>1</sup> Providing safe, quality emergency nursing care requires expertise in triage and prioritization, resuscitation, intervention and stabilization, discharge training, crisis intervention, and emergency preparedness.<sup>2,3</sup> Unique to emergency nursing practice is the extensive knowledge and broad scope of practice required to care for diverse patients across the lifespan with a wide variety of complex illnesses and injuries within a limited time period.<sup>1</sup> Operating from the presenting chief complaint rather than an admitting diagnosis is a unique approach to emergency and ambulatory nursing practice.

Emergency nurses work in stressful, fast-paced environments where they integrate evidence-based knowledge, make rapid assessments, critical decisions, and life-saving interventions while prioritizing and multitasking.<sup>4,5</sup> Emergency nurses therefore require a skill-set well beyond that necessary for nursing licensure one that is specific to their practice environment and the care of a wide variety of patients.

### ENA Position

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association that:

1. The Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), the professional organization for the specialty of emergency nursing, defines the scope of an emergency nurse's role.
2. Successful emergency nurse orientation is a comprehensive, individualized, evidence-driven, competency-based approach, incorporating adult learning principles, active teaching and learning activities, and socialization strategies.
3. A successful emergency nurse orientation program involves nursing management, nurse educators, preceptors, and peers.
4. A competent and effective preceptor is critical to the success of the orientation process.
5. Successful completion of an emergency nurse orientation is based on each participant's ability to demonstrate competence by applying knowledge using critical thinking skills, and demonstrating proficient technical skills to provide safe, quality care.
6. Research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of the wide variety of emergency nurse orientation programs and the demand for a practice specific residency program.

### Background

A comprehensive, individualized orientation program is critical in assuring that nursing staff are competent and provide quality and safe patient care.<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive approaches include a variety of socialization strategies,<sup>5</sup> a reliable competency assessment process throughout the orientation period,<sup>2-4</sup> an orientation plan created specifically to meet the needs of each nurse,<sup>2-4</sup> and active teaching and learning methods, including:<sup>6-9</sup>

- Self-paced learning modules
- Realistic simulations
- Traditional classroom lectures and group discussions
- Case scenarios
- Electronic learning
- Hands-on patient care with a competent and effective preceptor
- Hands on competency skill training and evaluation
- Collaborative relationships with interprofessional members of the emergency care team<sup>6-7</sup>



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- Consistent application of teamwork principles<sup>10</sup>

Hands-on experiences support and provide context for the didactic classroom lessons.<sup>6,11,12</sup> Integral to orientation is the ability of the learner to actively participate, question, and critique the process. Incorporation of social integration and support into orientation programs assists in facilitating the transition to emergency department team member.<sup>6,11,12</sup> The quantity of knowledge and skill required to work in the emergency setting can be overwhelming to a new emergency nurse. Thus, nurse educators, clinical nurse specialists, nurse managers, peers, and, in particular, preceptors, are critical to their success.<sup>6,9,11-12</sup> Completion is not based on a set number of hours, days, weeks, or months, but rather on each nurse's ability to demonstrate competence in applying knowledge, clinical skills, critical thinking and make safe, effective decisions in the emergency care environment.<sup>6,8</sup> As the emergency nurse gains experience, competence, and readiness, additional specialty orientation is required before performing the roles of triage and charge nurse.

Emergency nursing's professional association, ENA, defines the specific functions of the specialty of emergency nursing.<sup>1</sup> The framework for emergency nurse orientation content is derived in part from the *Emergency Nursing, Scope and Standards of Practice*,<sup>1</sup> the Emergency Nursing Online Orientation course,<sup>13</sup> and the *Emergency Nursing Core Curriculum*.<sup>14</sup> Orientation programs could include all or any combination of pertinent educational opportunities and emergency nursing standardized programs such as Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS), Basic Life Support (BLS), Emergency Nursing Pediatric Course (ENPC), Geriatric Emergency Nurse Education Course (GENE), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) Trauma Nursing Core Course (TNCC), and introduction to triage.

## Resources

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