



# Position Statement

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## Emergency Nurse Orientation

### Description

Emergency nursing is a specialty of nursing practice that is both autonomous and collaborative. The emergency nursing orientation process, tailored for the new graduate or experienced transitioning nurse, provides an introduction to the specialty's professional standards.<sup>1</sup> The focus of assessment and intervention based on a presenting chief complaint and patient acuity is a specialized approach unique to emergency nursing. Emergency nurses work in stressful, fast-paced, and time-constrained environments where they integrate evidence-based knowledge, make rapid assessments, make critical decisions, and perform life-saving interventions while prioritizing and multitasking.<sup>2</sup>

Emergency nurses 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. The qualified emergency nurse is competent to provide emergent, urgent, and non-urgent care to patients across the health and age continuum. This requires a fluid and continual process of knowledge acquisition, skills refinement, and risk recognition through continuing education.<sup>1</sup>

### ENA Position

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) that:

1. As the professional organization for the specialty of emergency nursing, ENA defines the scope and standards of the 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 the nursing team (managers, 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 risk recognition, while 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.



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## Background

A comprehensive orientation program implemented within a standardized framework facilitates success of the orientation process. A standardized framework for the delivery of content and evaluation of the orientee provides support for the preceptor and assures the comprehensive educational needs of the orientee are met through the building of knowledge and skills.<sup>3</sup> The use of a standardized tool for evaluation of the orientee provides an objective view of the orientation and enables gaps and failure to progress to be identified.<sup>3</sup> Specific exercises and discussion questions foster the development of critical thinking and clinical reasoning during the transition into practice.<sup>2-10</sup> The debriefing and discussion process after simulation or at the end of the clinical day provide the preceptor the opportunity to evaluate the thought processes behind the actions of the orientee. Clearly designated questions designed to facilitate reflective practice and evaluated with a rubric enable the preceptor to document progress of the orientee to assess risk recognition in patient scenarios. Critical thinking skills and risk recognition require the ability to assess, identify the highest priority or biggest risk to the patient, and strategize stabilization interventions.<sup>4,8</sup>

The complexity of knowledge needed to be a competent emergency nurse requires a variety of active teaching and learning methods, such as:

- 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>7</sup>
- Consistent application of teamwork principles<sup>10</sup>

Hands-on experiences support and provide context for the didactic classroom lessons.<sup>11,13</sup> Integral to orientation is the ability of the learner to actively participate in, question, and critique the process. Incorporation of social integration and support into orientation programs assists in facilitating the transition from orientee to emergency care setting team member.<sup>1,13</sup>

The preceptor functions as a failsafe for the emergency nurse orientee and the patient while modeling the desired characteristics and behaviors of the competent emergency nurse. The preceptor assignment will enable adequate individual instruction of the orientee while providing learning opportunities for the orientee. The preceptor role specifically can positively impact the one-year retention rates of the novice emergency nurse.<sup>12</sup> Preceptor confidence and competence is increased through specialized education in adult learning theories, feedback and evaluation communication, and conflict resolution.<sup>6</sup>



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The broad spectrum and depth of information required to work in the emergency care setting can be overwhelming for the new and transitioning emergency nurse. To facilitate this transition, the orientation program is individualized to the person rather than a designated time period, with a focus on the demonstration of the acquisition of the required knowledge and skill set to provide quality and safe care in the emergency care setting.<sup>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. Further information on the qualifications and competency for the triage nurse role can be obtained from the Triage Qualifications and Competency Position Statement.<sup>17</sup> 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>14</sup> and the *Emergency Nursing Core Curriculum*.<sup>14</sup> Any of the above-mentioned orientation programs and resources can help build a strong educational foundation for the emergency nurse or enhance a standardized program.

## Resources

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