

Affirmation of focused practice competencies

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ANA's newest program recognizing emerging specialties

IN AUGUST 2017, the American Nurses Association (ANA) Board of Directors approved the inclusion of an additional component to ANA's newly revised recognition of a nursing specialty, approval of a specialty's scope of practice statement, and acknowledgment of standards of a specialty practice program. The new component, affirmation of focused practice competencies, provides a formal review process for identifying the specific knowledge, skills, abilities, accountability, and judgment deemed important for professional practice success, interprofessional collaborative practice and team success, and achievement of defined outcomes. The component is designed to address the needs of an emerging specialty or focus of practice that has begun developing characteristics of practice, has no or few formalized competencies, and has few members.

The review criteria for affirming focused practice competencies require the following:

- a statement about the development and use of the competencies
- measurable competencies that include one action per competency
- accountability, communication, collaboration, and ethics aspects for each competency.

ANA's affirmation of focused practice competencies remains valid for 5 years. ANA encourages resubmission of the focused practice competencies for review after that time. (Please see nursingworld.org/3SC-Booklet.pdf.)

Nurse competence background

The public has a right to expect RNs to demonstrate professional competence throughout their careers, according to ANA's 2014 position statement, *Professional*

Role Competence. The statement defined a competency to be "...an expected level of performance that integrates knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgment." (To read the statement in full, visit goo.gl/n8PkFA.)

Provisions 4 and 5 of the 2015 *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* state that all nurses are responsible for establishing and maintaining their own competence. (To view the Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements, visit nursingworld.org/CodeofEthics.)

In addition, ANA's 2015 *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Third Edition*, incorporates competencies for each of the standards of practice and standards of professional performance. The competencies for each standard may be evidence of compliance, but they're not exhaustive. For example, Standard 12 Education states, "The registered nurse seeks knowledge and competence that reflects current nursing practice and promotes futuristic thinking." The standards and competencies framework is intended to promote and support nursing's focus on safety, quality, and evidence-based practice. Established specialty organizations that voluntarily elect to submit their specialty's nursing scope and standards of practice resource to ANA's review program follow the standards and competencies framework presented in *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Third Edition*.

The importance of competency review

RNs and advanced practice RNs must be critical consumers of competency lists and the subsequent academic and professional development educational programs espousing preparation for the select competencies. Look for ANA's affirmation of focused practice competencies to inform your critical assessment, thinking, and decision making about the quality and validity of competency lists. ★

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