

# A contemporary look at gerontological nursing

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**Nurse experts identify and respond to changing needs of an aging population.**

**WHAT** exactly is gerontological nursing? Because of increasing numbers of older adult consumers and today's evolving healthcare services, the American Nurses Association (ANA) convened an expert workgroup of gerontological nurses in May 2017 to answer that question as part of its charge to review and revise the 2010 *Gerontological Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* professional resource. The significant diversity of the workgroup members prompted provocative and robust virtual dialogue during the twice-a-month, 2-hour conference calls over the past year. The group is well on the way toward achieving its goal, moving from review and revisions to the public comment period, where RNs are being asked for their input.

## Examining the definition

The workgroup has proposed a draft revised definition for the new 2018 gerontological nursing scope and standards document to better align with ANA's 2015 definition of nursing: "Gerontological nursing is an evidence-based nursing specialty practice that addresses the unique physiological, social, psychological, developmental, economic, cultural, spiritual, and advocacy needs of older adults. Gerontological nursing focuses on the process of aging and the protection, promotion, restoration, and optimization of health and functions; prevention of illness and injury; facilitation of healing; alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response; and advocacy in the care of older adults, carers, families, groups, communities, and populations."

In addition to defining gerontological nursing, the workgroup members were asked to describe the who, what, where, when, how, and why content to include in the new scope of gerontological nursing practice statement. They also were tasked with linking their document content with the 2015 *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* ([bit.ly/2HJUIJ9](http://bit.ly/2HJUIJ9)) by providing examples of how all gerontological nurses

integrate each of the nine *Code of Ethics* provisions into practice in every setting.

## Addressing standards and competencies

The second component of the workgroup's discussions and writing involved review and extensive revision of the standards of practice and professional performance, with all accompanying competency statements. The standards of practice address the nursing process—assessment, diagnosis, outcomes identification, planning, implementation (including coordination of care and health teaching and health promotion), and evaluation—and its application to gerontological nursing. The standards of professional performance address a competent level of behavior in the professional role and include ethics, culturally congruent practice, communication, collaboration, leadership, education, evidence-based practice and research, quality of practice, professional practice evaluation, resource utilization, and environmental health.

## Call for public comment

This work has now moved to the next important developmental stage—a call for comment so that nurses, interprofessional colleagues, stakeholders, and the public can examine and vet the draft document. The workgroup members will review every comment and make appropriate revisions. After the two-step ANA review process, examination by ANA's Committee on Nursing Practice Standards, and final review and approval by ANA's Board of Directors, [Nursesbooks.org](http://Nursesbooks.org) will publish the new *Gerontological Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition* in late 2018. You can contribute to this effort by submitting your own comments and recommendations during the public comment period. Please alert others about this opportunity to learn about gerontological nursing, the specialty practice everyone can value for themselves and their families. ★

To participate in the public comment period, visit [nursingworld.org/gerontological-nursing-scope-and-standards-public-comment](http://nursingworld.org/gerontological-nursing-scope-and-standards-public-comment).

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