

September 29, 2021

Dear Program Directors:

The State Board of Nursing (Board) has been receiving inquiries from nursing education programs relating to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Pennsylvania's nursing education programs. Although many issues are in flux due to the unknown length of the pandemic, the following provides some responses to recent inquiries.

Clinical Hours

The Board has been asked how Programs should accomplish their clinical hour requirements in light of any clinical site adjustments/closures. This determination should be made by the Programs using the following construct contained in the Board's regulations:

- Programs must implement a comprehensive nursing education plan of study that includes an integrated didactic and clinical component taught according to evidence-based practice leading to the knowledge and skills essential to the practice of professional or practical nursing and culminates in a degree, diploma, or certificate.
- Learning experiences and methods of instruction must provide experience in the care of men, women, and children.
- The allocation of credit hours or clock hours must be consistent with the practice of the institution.
- The use of simulation hours and their ratio to clinical hours must be based on national standards such as put forth by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) or International Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL).

For ***RN Programs***, the regulations do not prescribe a specific number of clinical or didactic hours, nor the ratio of hours for didactic to clinical instruction or clinical to simulated instruction. For ***PN Programs***, the regulations require 60% clinical hours and 40% didactic hours.

Please note that in the Program regulations the Board is promulgating, the Board endorses Section 6.1 of the NCSBN Model Rules that permit no more than 50% of clinical experience per course to be obtained through simulation. These Model Rules were just approved at the August 2021 Delegate Assembly.

If a Program determines it is necessary to alter its method of curriculum delivery or clinical hours, the Program should inform the Board of the proposed action to be taken and provide a plan to assure that students continue to attain the learning objectives. Please refer to Sections 21.83 and 21.204 of the Board's regulations that address curriculum changes.

The Board has been accepting written plans by email and acknowledges plans following a review to assure that students will continue to achieve their learning outcomes. The plans are placed in the Program's file.

If a Program's plan changes a revised plan, along with its rationale, must be submitted.

Program Resources:

- Please check the Department of State (www.dos.pa.gov), Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (<https://www.dos.pa.gov/ProfessionalLicensing/Pages/Bureau-of-Professional-and-Occupational-Affairs.aspx>) and the Board of Nursing's websites (www.dos.pa.gov/nurse) as they are continually being updated.