

# An Innovative Multisite Approach—The Nursing Orientation Unit for RN Integration, Support, and Health (NOURISH™) Program



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In the current health care landscape, new nursing graduates face increasing challenges, including burnout, loss of confidence, and lack of attention to safety issues (Pauldine, 2024). The Nursing Orientation Unit for RN Integration, Support, and Health (NOURISH™) Program addresses these challenges by providing a well-defined, standardized, clinical approach to orientation, and builds upon the new graduate's student experience. The cornerstone of the program is a dedicated nursing professional development practitioner (NPDP) working with orientees on dedicated orientation units to support professional growth and well-being, while arranging experiences that build competence, confidence, and comfort. This column describes how the NOURISH Program was developed in

alignment with the NPD scope and standards (Harper & Maloney, 2022).

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The intent of the NOURISH Program is to create a safe, therapeutic, and welcoming environment for each newly licensed nurse. Experiential learning in a supportive environment is vital to preparing novice nurses for practice and retaining them while providing safe patient care. This environment must provide for the assimilation of new staff members into the team, goal-directed precepting, direct and timely two-way feedback, and ongoing support and mentoring.

A key component of the NOURISH Program is the use of dedicated orientation units. These units are selected based on patient population, preceptor resources, nurse leader interest, NPDP availability, and newly licensed RN orientee numbers. Nurses on these units are dedicated to working with newly licensed nurse orientees who spend 4 to 8 weeks in the NOURISH Program guided by an RN preceptor. While the dedicated orientation unit assignment might not be the unit where new nurses are hired, the NOURISH Program affords a foundational experience that promotes competence, confidence, and comfort in providing quality patient care. On these units, orientation is competency-based and personalized to the orientee's professional development needs. If the unit is not the new orientee's permanent unit, the orientee receives additional orientation on the home unit after NOURISH is completed.

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Several actions promote a welcoming environment for the newly licensed nurse. Initially, posting pictures of preceptees and orientees on the unit bulletin boards allows all team members to recognize the new nurses and welcome them. Additionally, signs and posters acknowledging the orientees, as well as the unit's participations in the NOURISH Program, bolster a welcoming environment. Personal cards and notes let the new nurses know how excited their colleagues are that they are joining the team. Each of these encouraging actions helps the new employee feel recognized, valued, and included. Inclusion is a key concept in NPD Standard 9, Respectful and Equitable Practice (Harper & Maloney, 2022).

To ensure a safe and supportive working environment, a dedicated NPDP, acting in the roles of learning facilitator and mentor (Harper & Maloney, 2022), supports preceptors working with newly licensed nurse orientees. For example, when opportunities arise to experience patient situations or perform new skills, the NPDP oversees the orientee in these specific learning situations, allowing the preceptor to continue the care of assigned patients. Additionally, when the preceptor encounters challenging situations with an orientee, the NPDP mentors the preceptor by providing "feedback, guidance, and role modeling" (Kusterbeck, 2019, Conclusion Section) to support the preceptor's growth as delineated in NPD Standard 16, Professional Practice Evaluation (Harper & Maloney, 2022).

Another key component of the NOURISH Program is weekly meetings with all key stakeholders, which enhance a safe and therapeutic environment. These meetings include the NPDP, preceptor, orientee, and nurse leader. During these supportive meetings, the orientee's accomplishments, as well as goals and objectives for the following week, are discussed. Additionally, the NOURISH Program team engages the orientee in discussions to encourage self-reflection and transparency, with a focus on health, self-care, and well-being in alignment with NPD Standard 13, Ethics. This standard requires NPDPs to encourage "learners' self-care and self-reflection to support and preserve personal health, well-being, and integrity" (Harper & Maloney, 2022, p. 87). These meetings incorporate the "Feedforward Method," a coaching method that focuses on what should be done in the future, rather than what was done wrong in the past (Goldsmith, 2022).

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The success of the NOURISH Program hinges on the support and engagement of several key stakeholders working together as partners for practice transition, to ensure adequate time and resources are dedicated to implement all aspects of the program as prescribed. These stakeholders include the NPDP, the NPD Director at the site, and the system nursing professional development team.

### Dedicated Nursing Professional Development Practitioner

As previously described, a dedicated NPDP is assigned to the NOURISH Program units to serve as a learning facilitator and mentor by providing support to both the orientees and the preceptors. Each NPDP is responsible for no more than three nursing units and overseeing 10 to 15 orientees. The NPDP is expected to maintain a consistent presence on the units participating in the NOURISH Program, checking in with each orientee and preceptor routinely. As expert clinicians, they are expected to provide bedside support to orientees in patient care skills and to intervene in care as appropriate. The NPDP also identifies clinical experiences suitable for the newly licensed nurse. Logistically, the NPDP is responsible for weekly team meetings with each orientee to ensure feedback is provided consistently.

### Site Nursing Professional Development Director

Each site has a Nursing Professional Development Director who is an NPD Practitioner. The site director serves as an advocate for NPD (Harper & Maloney, 2022) by ensuring that the dedicated NPDP is solely responsible for preceptees and preceptors in the NOURISH Program. To ensure this singular focus, the site director might need to reassign responsibilities. The director also serves as the liaison for both site nursing leadership and system level NPD oversight. The site director and NPDP collaborate to support the development, monitoring, and evaluation of NOURISH Program outcomes, in alignment with NPD Standard 6, Evaluation. Hospital and unit-based data are tracked on a scorecard to facilitate systemwide outcome measurement.

In alignment with NPD Standard 11, Collaboration, the site director works closely with nursing leadership, including the site Chief Nursing Officer, in championing the program to ensure acceptance by staff and preceptors. Leadership teams are invited to attend meetings led by the NPDP and site director in which successes and opportunities for improvement are shared to ensure NOURISH Program impact. Additionally, the site director and NPDP work closely with other nurse leaders to ensure appropriate staffing resources to care for patients while teaching new orientees.

### System Nursing Professional Development Team

A systemwide initiative, the NOURISH Program, is overseen by the system NPD team. This team, as change agents, identified the need (Standard 1, Assessment and Standard 2, Diagnosis), planned (Standard 4, Planning), and implemented (Standard 5, Implementation) the program (Harper & Maloney, 2022). They work closely with local nurse leaders and directors to ensure consistent execution across all sites, identify program strengths and areas for improvement, and measure return on investment in alignment with Standard 6, Evaluation. Additionally, this team conducts

orientation to the NOURISH Program for new NPDPs, delivering a consistent vision and message in alignment with NPD Standard 15, Quality of Practice. The corporate team also promotes the benefits of the program to stakeholders, staff, and the community by sharing pictures and stories of the program's outcomes.

## OUTCOMES

In the year since implementation and with over 150 participants across the system, the benefits of the NOURISH Program can already be felt. The NPDP's direct involvement with the patient care being provided by orientees allows rapid problem identification and resolution. As a result, fewer newly licensed nurses require orientation extensions. Additionally, NPDPs can identify intractable issues and work with department leaders earlier to identify staff who need additional support, reassignment, or dismissal. Anecdotally, nursing leadership teams report newly licensed nurses are more prepared for an independent patient assignment upon completion of orientation.

## SUMMARY

The implementation of the NOURISH Program enhances autonomy and strengthens the level of competency of newly licensed nurses. It provides a bridge for transitioning from student to professional nurse and offers an environment that encourages experiential learning, encouragement, and belonging. As a result, newly licensed nurses have more confidence, competence, and comfort upon completion of orientation.

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