

INTRODUCTION:

A Timely Resource for Nurse Manager Preceptors

Precepting has always been considered a noble activity. But no time has it been more important than today in our changing health care arena. We are all aware of the significance of the current nursing shortage and its impact on patient care. What has received less attention is the looming shortage of nurse managers and nurse executives—leaders of the future who will be needed for redesigning the health care system. Though changing slowly, the majority of nurses are women and white. The importance of recruiting more men and women of diversity into our nursing profession is widely recognized. This is needed not only to help solve the nursing shortage but also to position these health care professionals for providing care to the changing face of the American health care consumer. Now is the time for qualified nurses, especially those of ethnic diversity, to capitalize on the opportunities to advance within nursing.

Loyola University Chicago's Health System Management Program recognizes these disparities, and is committed to the education and nurturing of ethnically diverse nurse leaders. It seeks to provide role models for ethnically diverse individuals considering a career in nursing, and to provide the leadership to assure the cultural competence of health care institutions in the future.

In order to meet this challenge, it is imperative for graduate nursing students earning their master's degree in health systems management/ nursing administration to have exposure to nurses in administrative and leadership positions who can serve as preceptors for clinical practice. It is hard to imagine how students could be successful without the guidance of preceptors, ideally ones with experience working with a multi-cultural work force. Although managers may be functioning at an expert level in daily practice, it is not assumed that all have the expert skills of a preceptor. Even the most experienced nurse manager/ executive/ leader who is assuming the role of preceptor can find juggling added responsibilities with the host of demands in a busy professional life to be overwhelming. While this book is primarily for formal student/preceptor situations, it is also designed to be useful for managers who, as a part of job expectations, serve as preceptors and role models for their staff and colleagues. Moreover, clinical nurses involved in ongoing staff orientation may benefit from the principles, strategies and suggestions offered throughout this book.

Precepting can seem a daunting experience to both the novice and expert. This Preceptor Manual for Advanced Practice Nursing in Health Systems Management was designed with you in mind. It presents both general learning principles and precepting techniques that can be used in a variety of settings, including primary, tertiary and non-traditional health care settings. The novice preceptor will find that this manual provides more than enough information to enhance your knowledge and skill in precepting. More experienced preceptors may find much of the material very familiar. We suggest that you review the following description of each chapter and simply refer to the sections that address your particular learning need.



- Chapter 1:** This chapter describes characteristics expected of all preceptors, along with discussion of some of the unique skills required in the administrative arena. A listing of common course objectives for practicum experiences is provided. Readers can take the Preceptor Self-Assessment Survey to rate their own attributes in four categories. A Preceptor Development Plan is provided to help you strengthen your precepting effectiveness. Important questions are listed to help you determine whether this is the appropriate time for precepting in your setting. Finally, suggestions are provided on how to utilize faculty to make the precepting role more effective and satisfying.
- Chapter 2:** This general chapter describes the three domains of learning along with strategies to optimize learning in each domain. Three principles of adult learning are highlighted using the AIR acronym: active involvement, individual differences, and relevance/motivation. Many strategies are described on how to apply these principles. Information is included relevant to assessing student learning styles.
- Chapter 3:** This nuts and bolts chapter provides necessary information for starting the preceptor role: how to assess the student as an individual, conduct the initial planning meeting, and determine realistic and feasible objectives. It then moves to providing examples of project ideas appropriate for the administrative/ management student. It includes tips on helping the student transition to a new organizational setting, along with suggestions on how to capitalize on role modeling opportunities and to facilitate critical thinking in the management setting.
- Chapter 4:** This practical chapter emphasizes the critical role preceptors play in providing formative and summative student evaluation. Detailed strategies are shared on how to provide constructive feedback. A sample approach is described for conducting a corrective interview, and several scenarios are depicted for handling complex problems. Many preceptors struggle with when and how to “let go”, so indicators that signal student readiness for increased responsibility are provided.
- Chapter 5:** This unique chapter highlights the mutual benefits to both the preceptor and student that can be derived from precepting students from a cultural background different from your own. It describes how to establish an environment for Creative InterChange during the preceptorship using four conditions: authentic interacting, appreciative understanding, creative integrating, and expanding capacity. Examples are provided on how to translate these actions and behaviors into specific steps.
- Chapter 6:** This powerful chapter moves beyond precepting and introduces preceptors to “coaching” and skills that will allow you to take a “coach approach” while in the preceptor role. Specific coaching skills of active listening, asking powerful questions, and affirming or acknowledging are presented in great detail using a student-preceptor dialogue format. Several sample case conversations are provided to demonstrate how to conduct the “coaching conversation”.
- Chapter 7:** This important chapter addresses the challenges of balancing daily work responsibilities with precepting and offers suggestions on how to avoid “preceptor burnout”. It is a must read for both novice and expert preceptors.

Appendices: This section provides important supplementary information on the domains of learning discussed in chapter 2, a Thumbnail Sketch of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators that can be used for both student and preceptor self-evaluation, as well as an enlightening case study depicting the effects of unconscious attitudes and bias.