

The Preceptor Program Builder

Essential Tools for a Successful Preceptor Program



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Dedication

To those who have the passion and willingness to give back to others and those who understand the importance of giving. Judie Bopp best expressed the specialty of preceptoring and its impact on those who give and receive within the context of such relationships:

“The capacity to watch over and guard the well-being of others is an important gift, and one that is learned with great difficulty. For it is one thing to see the situation others are in, but it is quite another to care enough about them to want to help, and yet another to know what to do.”

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Dr. Diana Swihart, the CEO for the American Academy for Preceptor Advancement, enjoys many roles in her professional career, practicing in widely diverse clinical and nonclinical settings. An author, speaker, researcher, educator, and consultant, she has published and spoken nationally and internationally on a number of topics related to preceptors, shared governance, competency assessment, professional development, servant leadership, Magnet Recognition Program®, research and evidence-based practice. In 2008, her publication *Nurse Preceptor Program Builder: Tools for a Successful Preceptor Program* (2nd ed.) was selected as a foundational resource for the national VHA RN Residency Program.

Dr. Swihart has served as an ANCC Magnet Recognition Program® accreditation appraiser, as the treasurer for the National Nursing Staff Development Organization, and as adjunct faculty at South University and Trinity Theological Seminary and College of the Bible distance learning program.

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Solimar Figueroa brings 33 years of experience in her professional nursing practice. Now a Clinical Educator II, her practice emanated from the Philippines, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Michigan, and the state of Florida. Ms. Figueroa's experience includes the position of an operating room nurse, operating room in charge, director of nursing, chief nursing officer, assistant director of nursing, and clinical educator. She also serves continually as a preceptor, a role that is very close to her heart.

Currently, Ms. Figueroa is a clinical nurse educator/preceptor liaison at Baptist Health South Florida. She had presented nationally on the "Married Sate Preceptorship Model" a one-on-one preceptoring model she developed for new nurse's transition in the practice setting. Her model was published in *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*. She is also an ANCC appraiser and has her Masters in Nursing and Health Care Administration and is currently pursuing her PhD in Nursing.

Preface

Preceptoring is a specialty requiring a unique set of knowledge, skills, and expertise. The need for qualified, experienced, effective preceptors continues to grow as healthcare organizations hire new employees, many of whom are newly graduated or newly qualified. Their preceptors need practical and pragmatic preparation and support to successfully engage in this increasingly critical role. To meet the present and future demands of increasingly complex healthcare work environments, preceptors also need lifelong learning to advance their communication, collaboration, and collegiality skills.

Preceptors guide preceptees through role transitions in academic, administrative, and practice settings in all workplaces within healthcare. Their positive impact on retention has been well established in the literature and in practice for seasoned staff who serve as preceptors and for those they precept.

The preceptor role, with all of its intrinsic complexities, responsibilities, and accountabilities, is not one to be accepted lightly. Preceptors provide practical and pragmatic support, guiding new employees, new graduates, and students through the onboarding and competency validation processes. As a preceptor, you have the opportunity to help shape their experiences in positive and creative ways. But to do that successfully, you need some tools.

The purpose of *The Preceptor Program Builder* is to provide leaders, educators, and preceptors with the essential tools and ideas for practical approaches for creating effective preceptor programs to meet those evolving needs. In this book you will find a compilation of information and tools to help you develop your professional skills as you advance your understanding of your preceptor roles, competencies, and responsibilities. You will also find guides for exploring how adults learn, creating a climate of learning, and validating competencies.

You can explore ways for providing feedback positively and constructively and evaluating your preceptees and preceptorship. Confronting reality shock and “letting go” of the preceptee as he or she transitions into practice can be difficult for both the preceptor and preceptee. This book helps you through both as you grow and develop your knowledge, skills, and abilities in the specialty of preceptoring. These tools can support your work as you participate in a partnership with your leadership, educators, interprofessional colleagues and interdisciplinary team members to ensure your preceptees confidently engage in safe, competent practice.

Let’s take a closer look and see what’s here.

The Preceptor Program Builder is organized into twelve chapters around a three-part strategic and tactical process for implementing your own preceptor program. *Part I* considers the evolving specialization of preceptoring. In *Part II*, more tools and strategies are provided for preparing preceptors through training and education programs. Finally, *Part III* moves us from building programs to advancing preceptors beyond the preceptorship and transition into service. Each chapter begins with an encouraging quote and concludes with a brief summary of content.

- Chapter 1 explains the need for establishing effective preceptorships in today’s complex work and healthcare environments. It differentiates between coaching, preceptoring, and mentoring and describes the role of preceptorships in orientations.
- Chapter 2 identifies some of the many different roles of preceptors and their essential responsibilities. It describes reality shock and offers several strategies preceptors can use to help preceptees overcome each of the five phases encountered during a preceptorship.
- Chapter 3 explores how to prepare preceptors to be successful in work settings. It identifies the components of an effective preceptorship program and explains how to develop a program for preparing preceptors.
- Chapter 4 reviews the principles of adult learning and ways to apply them to building preceptors. It considers how individuals access information through preferred learning styles and process it using selected multiple intelligences.
- Chapter 5 describes the process for identifying preceptors and preceptees and the risks and rewards of preceptorships. Building relationships to support preceptorships must also include methods for how to manage a complaint by a preceptor or preceptee.
- Chapter 6 identifies ways primary preceptors help preceptees develop professional work skills and relationships. It explains the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication in preceptorships. It features three communication patterns used by preceptors and preceptees.

- Chapter 7 relates the importance of evidence-based practice to preceptorships, critical-thinking behaviors and how they help preceptees, and how preceptors can help preceptees with time management skills.
- Chapter 8 discusses orientation and competency validation processes. It describes competency-based orientation as it relates to preceptorships and how competencies are assessed as part of the preceptor process.
- Chapter 9 differentiates between feedback and performance evaluation. It focuses on providing effective feedback and applying evaluation principles to a preceptor program as a whole.
- Chapter 10 explores the importance of introducing preceptees to the team concept and strategies for expanding effective communication networks.
- Chapter 11 features some of the issues and trends in preceptoring, including preceptor models applicable in work and practice settings, an evidence-based preceptoring approach to program management, appraisal, and transition to service.
- Chapter 12 reviews the relationships in the onboarding development continuum from preceptoring to mentoring and describes the transition from preceptorship to mentorship.

The information presented in *The Preceptor Program Builder* reflects the research and opinions of the authors, contributors, and advisors. Because of ongoing research and improvements in preceptoring, information technology, and education, this information, these tools, and their applications are constantly shifting, changing, and evolving as preceptoring continues to grow as a specialty role in healthcare, leadership, and other services and disciplines.

Because this book explores opportunities for preparing preceptors for increasingly complex and uncertain work environments, we have provided you with definitions, new theories and approaches to teaching and advancing preceptors, and a plethora of tools to help you create your own programs and preceptorships as you, too, continue to grow as a preceptor. It is the authors' sincere hope you will add this work to your library and consider how you, too, might contribute to this growing body of knowledge and expertise through your own practice and career development in preceptoring.

-Diana Swihart and Solimar Figueroa

Note from the publisher

Be sure to download the additional materials of this book at www.hcpro.com/downloads/11885. You will find several resources, including your Preceptor Workbook and a comprehensive PowerPoint slide deck, both of which can be customized for your organization and the needs of your program.

For more information about continuing education credits available for this resource, please view your Education Instructional Guide, located with the rest of the downloadable material.

To further support your preceptors and their preceptees, you can purchase handbooks we've created specifically for their use. These handbooks have been designed as compact guides to successful participation in active preceptoring relationships. To find out more about these handbooks, and to order copies, visit www.hcmarketplace.com.

The Effective Preceptor Handbook for Nurses

The Essential Preceptee Handbook

Part I.
Preceptoring:
An Evolving
Specialty

1

What is a Preceptorship?

The capacity to watch over and guard the well-being of others is an important gift, and one that is learned with great difficulty. For it is one thing to see the situation others are in, but it is quite another to care enough about them to want to help, and yet another to know what to do.

—Judie Bopp

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the participant will be able to:

- Explain the need for establishing effective preceptorships in today's complex work and healthcare environments
- Differentiate between coaching, precepting, and mentoring
- Describe the role of preceptorships in orientations

Learning is a continuous, lifelong journey of discovery. The changing landscapes of healthcare, leadership, education, and practice call for learning environments with preceptors and mentors who embrace point-of-service employees' learning through experience at multiple junctures (Bruce 2013), such as:

- During their studies and explorations of learning and practice opportunities, e.g., students (preceptees)
- At entry to service, e.g., new graduates and the newly qualified (preceptees)
- At points of transition to independent work or practice or change in role, position, or specialty (preceptees)
- At the point when fully transitioned employees move into positions of influence and growing expertise (preceptees and mentees)

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The role of preceptors has been developed most extensively by thought leaders and practitioners in nursing (Ulrich 2012) and pharmacy (Doty 2011; Ginsburg & Cueller 2009). However, the specialty of precepting has continued to evolve over the past few decades and moved into other disciplines, professions, and academic and work settings. Standards of practice and performance have been developed (Roth, Figueroa, & Swihart 2013) and certifications established for preceptors.

More and more research is being published and models are being created to guide the education and development of preceptors across service lines and at every level of an organization (see Bibliography). However, healthcare continues to lead this critical advancement in teaching, developing, and socializing new employees, new graduates, the newly qualified, and students.

Preceptors in Healthcare

Why is it so important to precept others? Workplace and practice environments are more complex and demanding than ever before, especially in healthcare. Employees at all levels of an organization need to experience the guidance and facilitation shown by experienced staff and leaders in work and clinical settings. They all benefit from guidance and support in the midst of shifting policy decisions, fluctuating staff skill mixtures, increasing regulatory sanctions and audits, education reforms, and information overload.

We can find many more reasons and benefits in recorded literature (see Bibliography). However, perhaps the most basic and all-encompassing reason is that it works.

So often, two peers can solve difficulties they encounter in their work together much better than with an educator or manager—no matter how expert or experienced a manager may be. In many ways, the working preceptor can help a new employee, the newly qualified, or student preceptee more than an educator or a peer. The problem or issue the preceptee wants the preceptor to explain is often one that the preceptor has recently handled.

On the other hand, more experienced staff in the work environment may have encountered the situation or question so long ago that they have forgotten much that is important to the preceptee. Staff members see a multitude of other problems, limitations, needs, and issues that “ought” to concern the preceptee but do not. The staff also see the problem or situation in such a completely different light they may not always understand what might be really troubling the new preceptee.

Effective, consistent, thorough preceptorships are a major factor in the recruitment and retention of qualified staff at every level of an organization and college or university. This is accomplished most successfully through facilitated orientations, competency assessments and verifications, and transitions to service through specialty preceptors and mentors. Reconciling consistently high-quality work while accommodating excellent preceptorships requires creativity, flexibility, and a commitment to quality and safety across disciplines and roles.

The need for effective, efficient preceptors continues to rise as companies groom and grow talent from within their ranks through peer partnerships. Establishing definitive preceptorships to guide students and prepare new graduates and the newly qualified for today's demanding professional work and practice environments is efficient and cost-effective when done well. Although managers and supervisors remain key to recruitment, staff members remain key to retention.

Experienced preceptors demonstrate skill in communication and the ability to work collaboratively with others, embrace servant leadership in their service to others, enjoy well-established credibility, and determine the best possible outcomes in all work and practice settings. An effective preceptorship program with such specialty preceptors is critical to the success of students, the newly qualified, and experienced employees moving among the multiple disciplines and specialty areas of our complex healthcare systems.

Key Definitions

Many experts have defined and described the concepts of coach, preceptor, and mentor. These concepts have become difficult to separate and are often used interchangeably. Employers and employees alike remain confused as to how to functionally apply them, especially during onboarding and competency validation processes.

Frequently, only the roles of coach and mentor are used while the combined time-limited role of preceptor is lost. Rather than attempting to reconstruct or redefine these support structures, this program draws from many resources to operationalize them so they can be standardized in training and implementation (see Bibliography).

Coaches

Coaches advise and instruct the employee primarily on job-related activities and tasks—in other words, how to perform and prioritize technical tasks, documentation, employee and safety issues, organizational relationships and etiquette, professional work habits, and how to organize and delegate work assignments and duties. Coaches introduce new employees, the newly qualified, or students to the work and/or practice team and describe the roles of each member. They make suggestions on effective work-related activities, time and stress management, and how to organize, prioritize, and delegate work assignments.

Coaching is generally time-limited and reliant on proximity. Coaches often orient new employees and students and help them verify their initial work-specific competencies when they first arrive on the unit or work area.

Mentors

The process of mentoring reflects the mission, vision, philosophy and culture, management and leadership styles, and direction of the organization, service, and/or department. Mentors encourage

6 What is a Preceptorship?

mentees (recipients of mentoring) to move beyond the status quo and help them find groundbreaking professional opportunities, such as exploring new leadership roles, accepting speaking or writing engagements, or acquiring advanced learning experiences. They challenge mentees and step into the background, urging the new or experienced employee forward.

Mentors allow employees to learn through many of their own failures as mentees grow and develop through debate, active listening, and open communication with one another. By acting as a source of intellectual stimulation and encouragement, mentors help employees develop trust in their own abilities and skills. They push them to search out professional paths that the employee might have not known about or taken much longer to discover otherwise.

Mentorships can continue for an indeterminate length of time and are not reliant on proximity. They may evolve into mutual or shared mentoring behaviors. Some employees have continued to mentor one another across years and continents, well beyond the initial phase of the mentorship.

Onboarding

Onboarding, also known as organizational socialization, is a term taken from the business world that describes the global process of assimilating new hires into an organization and includes three phases: (a) prehire, (b) orientation, and (c) transition to service as they acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to become effective members of the organization.

During the onboarding process, preceptors often use formal meetings, lectures, videos, printed materials, or computer-based and competency-based orientations to introduce new hires to their new jobs and to the organization. Research shows that preceptors engaged in these socialization activities during the onboarding process lead to positive outcomes for preceptees, e.g., higher job satisfaction, better job performance, greater organizational commitment, and reduction in stress and intent to quit their positions or the organization.

Orientation

Orientation is often the most visible part of onboarding. It is a period of introduction to the philosophy, mission, vision, goals, policies, procedures, role or position expectations and competencies, physical facilities and resources, patient populations (if applicable), and services of a particular work or practice setting upon entry into a new position or setting or when roles/responsibilities change.

Preceptors

Preceptors are experienced and competent staff members who may have received formal training to function in this capacity and who serve as role models and resource people to new employees, students, the newly qualified, or new graduates (preceptees). They merge the knowledge, skills,

abilities, and roles of both coaches and mentors to help preceptees develop and mature into strong practicing professionals within new or different professional work and practice environments.

Preceptors introduce preceptees to their new roles and responsibilities, coach them on “the basics” (where to report; where to find supplies and resources; how to find and use work/area-specific equipment, work/area rules or guidelines, and the organization’s strategic plan, etc.), and support and shape critical-thinking skills by responding to teachable moments as they occur. They evaluate performance and give feedback for improvement. Preceptors introduce the employee to a wider network of staff members, leaders, and ancillary and support staff, frequently recommending preceptees for projects, committees, advancements, and honors within the work environment and communities of work and practice.

However, to be a successful preceptor, you must first begin with yourself. Emotions and personal health affect our reactions to others and may diminish our ability to engage in collaborative teamwork or to anticipate or respond to the needs of preceptees. If you struggle with anxiety, anger, or physical discomfort (self) and cannot work well with your colleagues (preceptees, team members, and support staff), you cannot engage effectively or efficiently in even the most basic activities or tasks.

Once personal well-being is managed, your focus can shift to helping preceptees and support staff. Healthy interpersonal relationships are critical for interdependent work and practice. Once achieved, then and only then can you focus on your duties and responsibilities.

The Preceptorship Experience

Preceptorships provide a unique context for building relationships wherein preceptees and preceptors experience the art of connecting to build rapport, communicate effectively, and manage conflict should the need arise (Raines & Ewing 2006). When mutual trust and respect are conveyed through peer partnerships, shared work experiences, or listening and facilitating another’s transition into service, an effective preceptoring relationship (a preceptorship) unfolds.

A preceptorship is a formal agreement between or among individuals to engage in a time-limited apprenticeship generally reliant on proximity. It is a relationship constructed to partner seasoned, experienced employees (preceptors) with students, the newly qualified, or new hires (preceptees) to facilitate their orientation and integration into their new roles and responsibilities in their work environments.

Preceptors help these individuals assess and verify their service-specific and work-specific competencies during onboarding and provide ongoing support and encouragement as preceptees transition into their new roles or positions. Eventually, the preceptorship may evolve into a mentorship as the preceptee matures into his or her new roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities.

8 What is a Preceptorship?

Preceptorships are intentional, individualized, inspired, and transformational. They occur in multiple formats that may be used for new-employee orientation, monitoring students, or integrating the newly qualified into the culture of the organization and service. They differ from coaching partnerships, shadowing experiences, or buddy systems where new hires, the newly qualified, transitioning staff, or students are also assigned to experienced or seasoned employees. In these, though, the relationship is more loosely organized, coaches or buddies may change frequently, and they do not usually have the training or experience to manage a formal preceptorship.

Although preceptorships may extend beyond the orientation or integration phase, they generally do not facilitate preceptees' career development beyond their present positions on their assigned work settings. If a preceptorship evolves into formal or long-term career advancement, it has become a mentorship.

The scope of the preceptorship must be clearly delineated so preceptors know what part of onboarding rests with them and what part remains with the organization: prehire, orientation, and/or transition to service. You will find preceptorships useful primarily during orientation to the clinical or work area or specialty and the transition to work and service settings, roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities. According to The Joint Commission, orientations provide new employees with initial information and development that includes an assessment of new employees' competency to safely and effectively perform the responsibilities of the jobs for which they were hired.



Timing for competency verification

Competency verification of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to achieve the expectations identified in the new employee's position description is a critical part of every preceptorship and generally occurs during the work-specific orientation.

Competency assessment and verification are completed during preceptorships in which those competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) are needed to function in specific roles and service settings. Preceptors help preceptees develop their work-specific competencies. They evaluate their progress and provide feedback to help preceptees improve their knowledge and skills and develop professionalism while entering their new roles and responsibilities through the critical developmental transition phases of onboarding and entry into service.

What Value Do Preceptors Add to an Organization?

People want to do a good job. Successful preceptorships clearly define measures and outcomes based on the purpose and vision of the organization, which are articulated and evaluated in the

orientation process for the new employee or student. Coaching, preceptoring, and mentoring are all essential concepts and roles filled with possibilities for increased self-awareness, commitment, and mutual respect among new employees and students.

Preceptors are employees talking about difficulties they have met, sharing insights they have gained, and passing on lessons they have learned by working in the many arenas of need they encounter each day. They facilitate the orientation, growth, and development of employees who will one day work side by side with them and who may become their peers, colleagues, and leaders tomorrow.

Preceptors connect with preceptees in ways that no one else can, building trust and responsibility as they gently draw preceptees into the “real world” of service and quality improvement.

In Summary

Who really benefits from all of this effort? Everyone!

Effective preceptorships provide the flexibility for the close, trusting relationships needed to develop the new employee, student, new graduate, or newly qualified to his or her fullest potential.

The next step in building formal and informal preceptorships in your organization is to understand the essential roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of the preceptor and preceptee within the context of those relationships.

The Preceptor Program Builder

Essential Tools for a Successful Preceptor Program

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The Preceptor Program Builder provides professional development staff the keys to creating a successful preceptor program in the healthcare environment.

In this unique resource, you will find the core tools, best practices, processes, adaptable forms and training materials for developing a professional preceptor program. With it, you will build an evidence-based foundation for your preceptor program, with a special focus on accessing adult learning styles, validating competencies, developing critical feedback and evaluation skills, and gaining confidence to successfully onboard and launch preceptees.

The Preceptor Program Builder can be coupled with *The Effective Preceptor Handbook for Nurses* and *The Essential Preceptee Handbook* to create a complete program resource for professional development staff, preceptors, and new staff members.

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