



ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Mennonite College of Nursing

FNP Preceptor Manual

Updated Fall 2026

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**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**
Illinois' first public university

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Dear Preceptor,

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a preceptor for the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence of our graduate program. Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University is committed to producing the “preferred graduate” and as such, maintains a strong clinical component for the program. This strength is based upon the quality of our experienced clinical preceptors, as well as that of our curriculum, faculty, and students.

This preceptor manual has been developed to provide you with information about the graduate program and the clinical courses for which you might serve as a preceptor. It also includes guidelines related to your preceptor role. We ask that you read this manual prior to precepting the student and to use it whenever a question might arise related the student’s clinical practicum. We encourage you to contact the course faculty should you have any questions or concerns about the clinical practicum or any student practicing with you. Contact information for course faculty is provided to you at the beginning of each semester in which you are serving as a preceptor.

We hope you will find your role as a preceptor both personally and professionally satisfying. And, again, we thank you for your contribution to the education of our future family nurse practitioners!

Sincerely,

The Family Nurse Practitioner sequence faculty
Mennonite College of Nursing Graduate Programs

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Family Nurse Practitioner Sequence Leader

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Resources used to develop this manual:

Ball State University. Preceptor orientation manual.

National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (2000). *Partners in NP education: A preceptor manual for NP programs, faculty, preceptors, & students*. Washington, DC: NONPF.

“Nurse Practitioner Clinical Preceptor Guide” adapted from The Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training Program Nurse Practitioner Clinical Preceptor Guide.

Values, Mission, Vision

Values

Building on Mennonite College of Nursing's century-old traditions and Illinois State University's Values, the Core Values that guide our mission and vision are:

- Human dignity
- Belonging
- Integrity
- Ingenuity
- Collaboration
- Excellence

Mission

Mennonite College of Nursing prepares nurses who are engaged, well-informed members of society capable of advancing the health and quality of life for all people.

Vision

Mennonite College of Nursing will be a national leader in *preparing exceptional nurses* who are culturally responsive practitioners, scholars, educators, leaders, and innovators in providing equitable healthcare.

Graduate Program: Purposes and Outcomes Objectives

The Doctor of Nursing Practice and Master of Science in Nursing degree programs offered at Mennonite College of Nursing are designed to prepare nurses to function in selected advanced practice nursing roles. The programs build on the generalist base of a baccalaureate program, which focuses on nursing practice with individuals, groups, and community systems.

Purposes

- Prepare nurses for advanced practice in health care
- Prepare nurses to assume leadership roles within the health care system at the regional, state, and national levels
- Prepare nurses who can identify researchable problems, participate in conducting research, and promote the use of research findings in practice
- Provide the foundation for doctoral study

Program Outcomes

Upon completion of the master's program, graduates will:

- Advocate for compassionate, equitable patient-centered care with a commitment to serve diverse and vulnerable populations
- Lead and evaluate safe and effective change for improved quality in practice and health care systems
- Advance a culture of excellence through lifelong learning and scholarly inquiry in a complex health care system
- Apply ethical and policy analyses to assess, intervene, and evaluate care delivery in and across healthcare systems
- Foster and lead collaborative interprofessional care teams to provide individual, family, and population-based care
- Navigate and integrate services across the healthcare system that promote ethical, cost-effective, and innovative change
- Translate evidence into practice within an interprofessional healthcare system
- Use communication and information technology to collaborate with healthcare consumers and providers across the healthcare system

Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) Sequence

The Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) sequence, a 44 semester-hour master's degree program, prepares graduates to function in an advanced practice role. The FNP utilizes an aggregate-based practice model for direct health care services that integrates preventive and self-care measures, as well as the diagnosis and management of commonly occurring acute and chronic health conditions. The role also includes participation in and use of research, development and implementation of health policy, and education of individuals and groups. The practice of the FNP is based on a synthesis of knowledge from the following areas: nursing theory, research, epidemiology, legal/ethical issues, health policy, advanced pathophysiology, advanced pharmacotherapeutics, diagnostic reasoning, and advanced health assessment, as well as content and clinical practica for the care of clients across the lifespan. Graduates are eligible to take the certification examination for Family Nurse Practitioners offered through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board (AANPCB). The program is fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

Program of Study

Course #	Course Title	Semester Hours	Clinical Hours
Core Courses			
NUR 401	Theoretical Foundations of Nursing and Health Care	3	
NUR 405	Epidemiology and Aggregate Based Health Promotion	3	
NUR 407	Scientific Inquiry and Research Design in Nursing and Health Care	3	
NUR 511	Health Policy	3	
Support Courses			
NUR 431	Diagnostic Reasoning for Advanced Nursing Practice	3	
NUR 433	Pharmacotherapeutics for Advanced Practice Nursing	3	
NUR 437	Pathophysiologic Bases of Health Deviation	3	
Specialty Courses			
NUR 471	Family Nurse Practitioner I	5	120
NUR 473	Family Nurse Practitioner II	5	120

NUR 475	Family Nurse Practitioner III	7	180
NUR 477	Family Nurse Practitioner IV	6	240
	TOTAL HOURS	44	660

Clinical Courses:
Course Description, Clinical Emphasis, & Outcomes

NUR 471: Family Nurse Practitioner I

Course Description

This course focuses on the specialized role of the family nurse practitioner in preventive health and primary health care of populations across the life span, emphasizing minor, self-limiting health problems, with particular emphasis on the pediatric client.

Clinical Emphasis

The practicum includes clinical preceptorships in pediatrics, urgent care, family practice or other primary care settings with nurse practitioners, physicians, and physician assistants.

Course Outcomes

At the successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Provide a supportive, confidential, and caring therapeutic environment for clients in the primary care setting.
2. Provide anticipatory guidance to families about growth and development and expected and/or potential alterations in health status.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking and diagnostic reasoning skills related to the identification of differential diagnosis of common health problems seen in primary care settings, especially those affecting pediatric clients.
4. Integrate knowledge from advanced assessment, preventative health guidelines, health promotion, pathophysiology, and nursing theory as the basis for the delivery of primary health care.
5. Communicate culturally sensitive attitudes and behaviors which facilitate client autonomy and participation in care.
6. Promote patient-centered behavioral change
7. Manage the care of infants, children, or adolescents based on available evidence-based practice guidelines and patient and family preferences and goals.

NUR 473: Family Nurse Practitioner II

Course Description

The focus of this course is the application of theory and practice-based research to comprehensive family-centered nurse practitioner services. Assessment, diagnosis, and interventions for primary health care management by the family nurse practitioner of common health conditions are included, emphasizing the role of the family nurse practitioner in family-centered, preventive health care of the child-rearing family.

Clinical Emphasis

The practicum includes clinical preceptorships with rotations in obstetric and gynecological, urgent care, and family practice settings with nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, physicians, and physician assistants.

Course Outcomes

At the successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Promote family-centered behavioral change with sensitivity and awareness of client's preferences.
2. Demonstrate critical thinking and diagnostic reasoning skills related to the identification of differential diagnosis of common health problems seen in primary care settings, especially in the care of women.
3. Integrate knowledge from health promotion, pharmacology, pathophysiology, and nursing theory as the basis for delivering comprehensive family-centered primary care across the lifespan.
4. Communicate culturally sensitive attitudes and behaviors which facilitate client autonomy and participation in care.
5. Promote an environment which facilitates learning through assessing the client's needs and readiness to learn.
6. Manage women in normal and high-risk pregnancy and women with gynecological need based on evidence-based practice guidelines and patient preferences and goals.
7. Collaborate with other members of the health care team when providing primary care to women.

NUR 475: Family Nurse Practitioner III

Course Description

The focus of this course is the application of theory and practice-based research to comprehensive family nurse practitioner services for adult and geriatric clients. Assessment, diagnosis, and intervention for primary health care management by the family nurse practitioner of complex health problems are presented. Management of chronic illness in primary care is emphasized.

Clinical Emphasis

Clinical practicum experiences in the course include acute and chronic illness management in urgent care, family practice, internal medicine, long-term care, or other primary care settings with nurse practitioners, physicians, and physician assistants.

Course Outcomes

At the successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Provide counseling and guidance to individuals and families about expected and/or potential changes related to specific health problems or changes in health status
2. Demonstrate critical thinking and diagnostic reasoning skills in therapeutic and clinical decision making in the identification, assessment, and management of adult and geriatric health needs in the primary care setting
3. Manage the care of adult and geriatric clients based upon evidence-based practice guidelines and patient preferences and goals
4. Communicate culturally sensitive attitudes and behaviors which facilitate client/family autonomy and participation in care

NUR 477: Family Nurse Practitioner IV

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide the family nurse practitioner student with an individualized preceptorship in one or more selected health care settings and to provide an opportunity for the student to synthesize the content from the core, support, and specialty practicum courses of the family nurse practitioner sequence through completion of a synthesis project. The course includes in-depth practice for students in the role of the family nurse practitioner in primary care settings.

Clinical Emphasis

The focus of the clinical experience is an integrated model for the delivery of primary care services to clients across the lifespan. Students may have several clinical sites in order to accomplish this. A family practice site or an internal medicine site along with an urgent care or specialty site are examples of appropriate clinical site choices.

Course Outcomes

At the successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Provide consistent, effective therapeutic presence with clients and families in primary health care settings
2. Synthesize content from across the sequence curriculum to demonstrate achievement of student outcomes
3. Demonstrate critical thinking and diagnostic reasoning skills in therapeutic and clinical decision making in the identification, assessment, and management of health needs across the lifespan in the primary care setting
4. Manage the care of clients across the lifespan based upon evidence-based practice guidelines and patient preferences and goals
5. Demonstrates professionalism in collaborative relationships

Policies Related to Preceptors

Criteria

The following are **minimum** criteria which must be met by persons serving as preceptors in the FNP program. The preceptor must:

- Be nationally certified in an area of advanced practice nursing appropriate to the goals of the graduate nursing program or be a board eligible/certified physician or physician assistant in an area appropriate to the focus of the student's area of study;
- Hold current licensure for the practice of medicine or advanced practice nursing in the State of Illinois;
- Possess at least two years of clinical experience following professional education as an advanced practice nurse, physician, or physician assistant;
- Demonstrate a sincere interest in teaching and mentoring graduate nursing students enrolled in the clinical practica;
- Be able to allocate sufficient time and space resources to effectively fulfill the role; and
- Show willingness to collaborate with graduate nursing faculty and graduate nursing students in planning and evaluating clinical practicum experiences.

Students may not use a preceptor who is a family member or is in any other relationship with the student that could create an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Role of Preceptors

Preceptors assist students in the graduate nursing program by:

- Providing students with opportunities to apply and advance their ability in health assessment, maintenance, and education, and assisting with the care management of selected clients
- Demonstrating collaborative interprofessional practice
- Serving as a resource for the student at the clinical site
- Providing rationale for their own practice, when needed
- Providing validation for health assessment findings and clinical decision-making
- Assisting with the evaluation of the student and the program

Preceptor Legal Liability

- The preceptor remains liable for the care of the patient
- Legal and reimbursement guidelines require that preceptors validate findings on physical examination, review laboratory tests, and confirm differential diagnosis and management plans with students for all patients they see
- Review by the preceptor must be documented in the patient's record and the preceptor must co-sign all records in which the student has provided documentation

Record of Hours Served as a Preceptor

When you agree to serve as a preceptor, your demographic information is entered into the College's preceptor database. The number of clinical hours you precepted are also recorded in the database. Preceptorship hours are often useful for recertification purposes for the preceptor. If you would like a letter documenting the hours you have precepted, please contact your student's clinical faculty or the FNP Sequence Leader.

Expectations of Students & Preceptors

Expectations of Students

The student is responsible for:

- Obtaining preceptor's written verification of agreeing to serve as a preceptor (if planning their own preceptor)
- Verifying with Mennonite College of Nursing that a clinical contract is in place with the clinical site prior to beginning the clinical experience (if planning their own preceptor)
- Contacting the preceptor to arrange a mutually agreeable clinical schedule
- Developing personal learning objectives and sharing these with the preceptor
- Observing policies of the agency, including dress code
- Adhering to all HIPAA requirements
- Notifying the preceptor of illness/absence and arranging to make up missed clinical time
- Conferring with the preceptor to keep informed of progress
- Conferring with the preceptor/faculty when the experience is not meeting the learning objectives
- Completing and discussing with the preceptor a self-evaluation of clinical performance/abilities
- Adhering to the standards and scope of professional practice

Expectations of Preceptors

The preceptor is expected to:

- Provide Mennonite College of Nursing with requested information related to the preceptor's licensure, practice, and education
- Read this manual and review the information for the course in which the student is currently enrolled
- Orient the student to the clinical site and applicable agency policies
- Facilitate an informal, collaborative, and mutually respectful environment in which to learn
- Be an expert role model
- Provide valuable and evidence-based learning experiences with appropriate client populations
- Allow and encourage "hands-on" assessment and care of clients in the clinical setting
- Provide ongoing feedback to improve the student's assessment and management skills
- Guide the student to pace the learning experience to meet client population and clinical site needs and student learning needs
- Direct the student to resources, such as treatment guidelines

- Notify faculty of any concerns about student behavior, clinical skills, and/or student progression, and provide written anecdotal documentation as appropriate **as soon as concerns arise**
- Complete and review with the student a final written evaluation of performance which is then maintained in the student's file at Mennonite College of Nursing

Clinical Teaching Skills of the Preceptor

Tips for Maximizing Student Learning Experiences

- **Students learn best by participating in client care**, not by simply observing. The preceptor needs to allow the student to provide "hands-on" care.
- **Students may question a preceptor's care which differs from textbook guidelines.** The preceptor may modify care guidelines based on experience as a health care provider and based on the unique client situation. It is helpful to discuss such modifications with the student and the rationale for such changes.
- **Students should not be expected to see every client seen by the preceptor.** Students need time to practice history-taking and physical assessment skills, to develop differential diagnoses, determine a plan of care, and document the client visit. Students should advance in the number of clients they see as they progress through the program, however, preceptors need to realize that even the student nearing the end of the program will not be able to or be expected to carry the full patient load of an experienced preceptor.
 - Here is an example of how a student's learning needs and the preceptor's need for maintaining efficiency can both be met:
 - 8:00-8:20 am Student sees patient 1 while preceptor sees patient 2
 - 8:20-8:40 am Patient 1 is seen by student and preceptor together
 - 8:40-9:00 am Student charts on patient 1 while preceptor sees patient 3
 - 9:00-9:20 am Student sees patient 4 while preceptor sees patient 5
 - 9:20-9:40 am Patient 4 is seen by student and preceptor together
- **Students need the opportunity to improve based on preceptor feedback.** Students benefit from critique of their performance throughout the clinical experience, not simply at the end of the experience. This allows the student the opportunity to continually improve in skills and helps to establish a supportive student-preceptor relationship.
- **Students view preceptors as role models for clinical skills.** Students benefit from initially observing the preceptor's abilities in interviewing, physical assessment, critical thinking, communication, and clinical and family education.

Clinical Teaching Skills for the Preceptor: Hints to Help Students Learn

Advanced practice nurses, physicians, and physician assistants may be novices in terms of serving as preceptors. Likewise, veteran preceptors may benefit from teaching hints. The following is provided to guide the preceptor in assisting the student to think critically and grow throughout the clinical experience.

Clinical Teaching Skill	What the Preceptor Might Say
Agree on the central clinical issue	“What do you think is going on?”
Get the student’s opinion of the central issue	“I agree....” “Have you considered....?”
Ask targeted questions to define the student’s learning needs	“What led you to that conclusion?” “What part of the comprehensive assessment is most important in this situation?” “Is the patient’s primary concern the same as yours?”
Teach general clinical rules	“When this happens, you need to consider...”
Reinforce the principles of care whenever possible and discuss modifications when appropriate.	“The standard guidelines for treatment include....” “The typical treatment for this problem is not appropriate for this patient because....”
Positively reinforce good clinical skills and appropriate professional behavior.	“You were thorough in your collection of the patient’s history.”
Review what needs to be improved. Correct mistakes.	“I noticed you palpated the abdomen before auscultating. What can you think of as being the problem with this approach?”
Promote critical thinking skills.	“The patient is complaining of weakness and is taking a diuretic. What kind of connection might there be?”

Professional Development of the Nurse Practitioner Student

It is expected that the FNP student will grow in ability and confidence as the student progresses through the four sequential clinical courses. Students may vary somewhat in this progression based on their past clinical experiences. For example, a student whose past nursing experience was focused in a medical-surgical setting may feel unskilled in a pediatric or women's health clinical site. Likewise, a student who is very comfortable in a pediatric setting may do well in the first clinical course which emphasizes pediatrics, but then initially feel uncomfortable in the women's health and/or adult clinical courses. Following are some general descriptions of students at various points in the clinical sequence.

The Beginning Student (enrolled in NUR 471 FNP I)

- Student spends initial time observing preceptor.
- Student assessment skills should be validated by the preceptor.
- Student management plans need significant guidance.
- Student needs high level of direction, which decreases as skill level increases.
- As student progresses, preceptor allows student to take on more independent responsibilities.

The Intermediate Student (enrolled in NUR 473 FNP II and NUR 475 FNP III)

- Student becomes more proficient in analyzing data, is more skilled with assessing and formulating management plans.
- Student improves in use of time and resources.
- Student may require assistance in prioritizing and coordinating care.
- Student requires support and assistance for complex cases.
- Student is ready to demonstrate other nurse practitioner functions such as patient/family teaching and participating in teams.

The Advanced Student (enrolled in NUR 477 FNP IV)

- Student is expected to perform all role functions in an organized, efficient, skillful and independent manner.
- Student is expected to engage in interdisciplinary role collaboration, consultation, and referral.
- Student and preceptor develop a more collegial relationship.

(Above from "Nurse Practitioner Clinical Preceptor Guide" adapted from The Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training Program Nurse Practitioner Clinical Preceptor Guide)

Clinical Evaluation: A Process and A Goal

Evaluation should be a collaborative effort between the student and the preceptor. The student should develop and use personal learning objectives to discuss learning needs with the preceptor. The preceptor likewise can use these objectives, along with course objectives, professional standards/scope of practice, and standards of care to provide the student with constructive evaluative feedback.

Formative Evaluation

Informal evaluation should occur throughout the clinical experience with the preceptor. This gives the student the opportunity to use feedback in a positive manner in order to improve performance.

- Feedback is best provided as soon as possible with consideration of patient needs being met first.
- The feedback should also be provided in privacy to avoid embarrassing the student in front of patients or staff.
- The preceptor should be descriptive in the feedback and help the student to analyze the cause of the problem and what might be done to avoid the problem in the future.
- The preceptor should also elicit feedback from the student as to how the preceptor might improve in providing feedback to the student.

Summative Evaluation

At the end of the clinical experience, the preceptor is asked to provide a written summary of the student's performance on a standard form. The preceptor and student should review this evaluation together at the end of the clinical experience. If formative evaluation has occurred throughout the clinical experience and open communication between the preceptor and student has been maintained, the content of the summative evaluation should not be a surprise for the student.