

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY  
School of Nursing  
The Professional Safe Practice Policy for SJSU Nursing Students

Providing safe nursing care for clients is an ethical and legal responsibility for professional nurses. In the School of Nursing (SON), this includes both faculty and students. This policy covers situations in all the clinical settings. Safe clinical practice is mandated by the California Board of Nursing's (BRN) Nurse Practice Act (<http://www.rn.ca.gov/npa/npa.htm>) and supported by the American Nurses' Association and other professional nursing organizations. Individuals who do not meet the stated professional standards for ethical and legal conduct in a clinical setting are held accountable to the School of Nursing's policies/procedures. Procedures are identified within the School of Nursing for sanctions. The School of Nursing (SON) seeks consultation with the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) on matters that affect nursing practice and those that challenge ethical standards, criminal conduct, unsafe clinical practice, and/or potential legal standards of the profession. Unprofessional conduct, in any clinical venue related to the School of Nursing is grounds for disqualification from the nursing major.

If the student fails to maintain professional conduct, or if the student is considered unsafe by the faculty and/or the agency in which the student is placed for clinical practice, that student is removed from the setting. If the student is not able to complete the course objectives, this constitutes a NO CREDIT for the course. Dependent on the specific circumstance, and if allowed, the clinical course may be repeated one time if a similar clinical experience can be arranged with another agency, and a faculty member will assume the responsibility for the student's learning experiences (Refer to the School's current policy for grievance and disqualification). Unsafe clinical practices of this nature are carefully managed at the administrative level so that the student is provided with a maximum learning opportunity while the client (the recipient of care) is adequately protected.

If, in the opinion of a designated SON faculty committee/s (e.g. Curriculum Coordinating Committee, Semester Curriculum Committees, Executive Committee, etc.) the student cannot provide safe care for clients or if the student fails to follow ethical/legal guidelines of the profession, then disqualification from the major will be recommended. When that occurs and if the student so desires, he/she must follow the University's policy and procedures for

grievances which are outlined in the University Catalog, and/or the University's catalog on the website. Students will be oriented to these safe clinical practice policies during the first semester of enrollment in the major, and both faculty and students will be responsible for reviewing the policy prior to beginning clinical rotations. All beginning nursing students must purchase the Student Handbook; this document delineates these policies. Drug testing and criminal background checks are required for all nursing students before beginning clinical rotations.

#### A. POLICY:

(1) A student whose behavior or pattern of behavior is found to be unsafe may be terminated from a clinical practicum for reasons of unsafe practices at any time during the semester and will receive a grade of "no credit" for the clinical course.

(2) If a student fails to maintain professional conduct in clinical, the student may be disqualified from the program, or other sanctions may be determined by appropriate parties.

#### B. DEFINITIONS:

The student will demonstrate professional behaviors which follow the legal and ethical codes of nursing; promote the actual or potential well-being of clients, health care workers, and self in the biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural realms; demonstrate accountability in preparation, documentation, and continuity of care; and show respect for the human rights of individuals.

Indicators to be used as guidelines for evaluating safe practice and professional conduct include the following:

1. Regulatory: The student practices within the boundaries of the California State Nurse Practice Act, the guidelines and objectives of the School of Nursing, and follows the rules and regulations of each health care agency. Examples of unsafe practice include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. failure to notify the agency and/or instructor of absence on a clinical day.
- b. failure to adhere to the SON dress code.
- c. presenting for clinical practicum under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- d. failure to make up missed clinical experiences, if required to do so.

- e. habitual or unexplained tardiness to clinical agency.
- f. excessive utilization of faculty time to ensure safe practice by one student to the detriment of other students in the clinical rotation.
- g. inadequate and/or poor preparation; and/or understanding of nursing care, patient's medications or patient's nursing needs, etc.

2. Ethical: The student practices according to the American Nurses' Association's (ANA) Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and the California State Nurse Practice Act. Examples of unsafe practice or unethical behaviors include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. refuses assignment based on client's race, culture, or religious preference.
- b. inappropriate nursing care in any assigned activity related to clinical practice.
- c. ignoring unethical and/or illegal behavior(s) of other health care providers in the clinical setting(s) which affects client welfare.

3. Biological, Psychological, Social, and Culture Realms: The student's clinical practice meets the total needs of the human system from a biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural standpoint. Examples of unsafe practice or violations of the safety policy include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. failure to display stable mental, physical, or emotional behavior(s) which may affect others' well being.
- b. failure to follow through on suggested referrals or interventions to correct deficit areas which may result in harm to others (deficit areas defined in (3a) above).
- c. acts of omission or commission in the care of clients, such as, but not limited to: physical abuse; placing in hazardous positions, conditions, or circumstances; mental or emotional abuse; and medication errors.
- d. unprofessional or inappropriate interpersonal relationships with agency staff, co-workers, peers, or faculty resulting in miscommunications, and/or disruption of client care and/or unit functioning.
- e. lack of physical and/or mental health necessary for carrying out comprehensive nursing care.

- f. placing fellow clinical classmates, faculty, and/or staff at personal and/or professional risk.

4. Accountability: The student's clinical practice demonstrates safe practice in the responsible preparation, documentation, and promotion of continuity in the care of clients. Examples of such unsafe practice include but are not limited to the following:

- a. failure to provide concise, inclusive, written and oral communication.
- b. failure to accurately record comprehensive client behaviors.
- c. failure to report questionable nursing practices.
- d. attempting activities without adequate orientation or theoretical preparation or appropriate assistance.
- e. dishonesty.
- f. lack of preparation by student to provide safe care for clients.

5. Human Rights: The student's conduct shows respect for the individual, client, health team member, faculty, and self, including but not limited to the legal, ethical, and cultural realms. Examples of unsafe practice include but are not limited to the following:

- a. failure to maintain confidentiality of interactions.
- b. failure to maintain confidentiality of records.
- c. dishonesty in relationships and/or in actions.
- d. utilization of stereotypical assessments which are detrimental to patient care.
- e. failure to recognize and promote every patient's rights.
- f. failure to report client abuse across the lifespan or abuse related to other professionals.

#### C. PROCEDURE:

A student whose behavior or patterns of behavior endangers the safety or threatens the integrity of a patient, peer, staff member, clinical instructor, faculty member, or agency personnel will be given a verbal and written warning by the primary clinical instructor, and/or by the School of Nursing Director. Potential life-threatening episodes require immediate actions, and the procedure listed below may not be realistic, as they relate to procedure items C-1-c through C-1-g (as listed below). Documented evidence from the student, faculty, and/or

staff will be considered in the decision of whether to terminate a student from a clinical practicum and/or further action is needed to determine if disqualification from the nursing program is warranted.

1. The primary instructor in a clinical course will:

- a. provide instruction, guidance, and interpretation of objectives during the clinical experience.
- b. suspend the student from the clinical practicum if the issue of safety is of significant magnitude affecting one or more parameters of safe clinical practice and/or jeopardizes the well-being of patients, staff, or peers until a decision has been obtained through the conflict resolution process.
- c. document patterns of behavior related to attainment of clinical objectives. Documentation may include direct observation by the clinical instructor as well as agency personnel and patient comments, as appropriate. Written work will also be evaluated.
- d. give a verbal and written warning for patterns of behavior that are not safe. To that end, the instructor will:
  - (1) provide specific facts of problem areas or deficiencies in relation to course objectives, evaluation tool(s), and performance.
  - (2) delineate corrective action and expected outcomes in writing with copies given to the student and the clinical instructor. One copy will also be placed in the student's file in the School of Nursing Office. The student and the clinical instructor must sign the written warning. If the student does not sign, the clinical instructor will then document that the student had the opportunity to sign the warning and refused to do so; pertinent discussion at the time that the student read the written warning should also be documented. Copies will be provided to the Semester Curriculum Chairs, Retention Coordinator, Undergraduate Coordinator and School of Nursing Director.
  - (3) set a specific time for a change in the behavior to be accomplished.

- e. re-evaluate progress: If positive attainment of expected outcomes is achieved, then the student will be allowed to continue with the clinical course. The written warning may not be removed from student's file.
- f. provide the student an opportunity for input and/or data regarding the evaluation of his/her clinical performance.
- g. consult with the Semester Curriculum Chair and/or School Director as needed for problem-solving and guidance.

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Copies: SJSU Nursing Faculty-Student Handbooks