

Why Use the Synergy Nurse Competency Framework?

Value of Synergy Nurse Competency Framework Toolkit Implementation

QUESTION: Why should our health system/hospital adopt the Synergy Nurse Competency Framework?

ANSWER: To definitively know when a nurse orientee is ready to transition to more independent patient assignments and is ready to complete orientation:

- Synergy Nurse Competencies (SNCs) demonstrate the nurse's ability to effectively address the full spectrum of patient needs.
 - SNCs go beyond the checklist of knowledge, skills and abilities to fully evaluate the nurse's ability to respond to the range of patient needs quickly and effectively.
- The content validity of the Performance Outcomes (POs) for each of the eight SNCs has thus far been verified through extensive literature confirmation followed by expert panel validation.

QUESTION: How does it benefit our orientation process?

ANSWER: How many times have you heard this scenario?

- Manager/Educator to Preceptor: "Are they ready to come off orientation yet?"
- Preceptor: "Their orientation checklist is done, but they still aren't ready."
- Manager/Educator: "What are they not ready to do?"
- Preceptor: "They can't take care of the patient."
- Manager/Educator: "What do you mean? What do they need to work on?"
- Preceptor: "I don't know, but they just aren't ready. They won't call the provider, and they don't have critical thinking skills. I told them they need to work on critical thinking and prioritization, but it just isn't clicking."

SNCs and POs give your team measurable metrics to specifically assess, evaluate and address the orientee's overall performance.

- They provide the orientee with specific PO milestones to achieve to ensure they are ready to transition from orientation to more independent assignments.
- SNCs go beyond the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) checklist to truly assess the nurse orientee's performance and readiness to transition off orientation.
- SNCs also provide your team with keywords and descriptions to help your preceptors teach specific behaviors that orientees need to develop to achieve competence.
 - Preceptors will have tools to know what the orientee needs to focus on.
 - Preceptors will have tools to guide orientees with actionable feedback, both positive and for improvement.
- Managers will have an improved understanding of an orientee's progress and when the orientee is ready to complete orientation.
- Setting expectations for meeting POs by certain phases of the orientation is easily implemented using "SNC PO Weekly Progress Notes: Orientee & Preceptor" and "SNC PO Summary: Early, Mid, Final Orientee Evaluation."

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- POs are listed with suggestions to identify which ones to complete during the initial, mid or final phases of orientation, providing a tiered approach to orientation.
- POs are prioritized as either required or optional; not all POs are required to be completed during orientation to achieve competence.
- A scoring system for each PO easily outlines the orientee's progress toward achieving competence in each SNC.
- Providing examples of meeting POs and setting SMART goals is also easily completed on the preceptor/orientee SNC progress notes.
- The tools allow flexibility to address POs in a different order depending on clinical situations.
- AACN also has a list of content-validated suggested KSAs for initial orientation to ICU and PCU.
 - As part of the phased orientation process, this list provides the core KSAs to focus on in the orientation phase. Content validity of the KSAs has thus far been verified through extensive literature confirmation followed by expert panel validation.
- A plan to address more advanced KSAs for the patient population served should be established toward the end of orientation.

QUESTION: What outcomes will be improved by adopting this framework?

ANSWER: AACN is completing beta testing that includes a pre/post systematic assessment of the product, the AACN Synergy Nurse Competency Framework Toolkit. Outcomes from this beta testing will inform any recommended updates to the Toolkit elements, and help demonstrate outcomes using this approach.

- **Outcomes that AACN will assess in the beta assessment of the toolkit:**
 - Confidence the nurse is ready to practice after orientation
 - Nurse's ability to recognize a change in patient stability
 - Nurse's ability to intervene for a change in patient stability
 - Nurse's ability to provide safe patient care
 - Nurse's ability to advocate on behalf of their patient
 - Preceptor and educator satisfaction/effectiveness for each of the individual items in the toolkit
 - Educator satisfaction with value of the toolkit and frequently asked question resources to recommend toolkit to their organization
 - Use of simulation, and was synergy included in the simulation orientation process
 - Orientee satisfaction with the process
 - Duration of individual orientations
 - Retention of individuals at end of orientation, 6 months, 12 months, 24 months
 - Why did they leave?
 - Was it dissatisfaction with orientation?
 - Partner transfer
 - Continuing education
 - Left profession

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- Professional engagement post orientation

QUESTION: Will it shorten orientation?

ANSWER: AACN does not have the answer at this time. AACN is measuring this outcome during the beta testing and ongoing after the beta. Beyond possibly shortening orientation, AACN anticipates this framework will:

- Help preceptors/educators/managers identify when it is safe to transition a nurse new to the practice environment from orientation to more independent practice.
- Standardize orientation with this framework, providing preceptors and educators the tools they need to validate that their orientees are meeting the foundational competencies for patient care and are ready to complete orientation.

QUESTION: Will it create less work?

ANSWER: When implementing a new system, initially there will be an added burden of orientation and education on the new system. However, the benefit of evaluating competence beyond the KSA checklist provides a better understanding of a new nurse's competence and readiness to practice.

- Ultimately, AACN anticipates this program will streamline and standardize orientation, ensuring targeted orientation needs are met and opportunities for feedback are provided.

QUESTION: What are the estimated time frames for education/training for the Competency Framework and tools?

ANSWER: AACN estimates preceptors will need at least four hours of training to learn about this approach and to become comfortable using the "SNC PO Weekly Progress Notes: Orientee & Preceptor"

- Training can be accomplished at the same time for preceptors, managers and educators.
 - AACN Synergy Nurse Competency Framework Toolkit contains all relevant training materials, including PowerPoint slide decks, an infographic, pocket resources and videos. The institution can choose to make some of this training on-demand.
 - AACN recommends an in-person (live or virtual) education format to practice using the tools, to ensure preceptors and educators are comfortable using them.
 - AACN recommends follow-up with the preceptors to resolve questions and ensure optimal implementation of the tools.

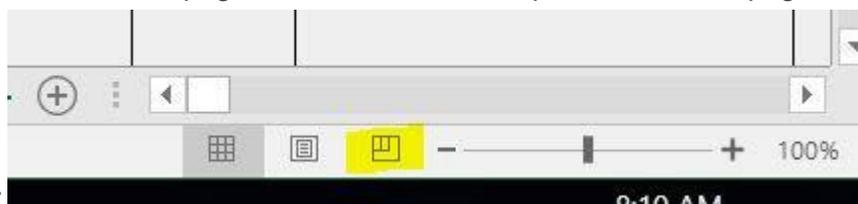
FAQ AACN Competence Framework Toolkit Implementation

Using the tools in paper format

Q: The spreadsheets aren't printing correctly. What should I do?

A: Print Set Up for Excel:

- **File > Print >** in the Print Settings, find the option for scaling > Change "**No Scaling**" to "**Fit all Columns on One Page**". This should enable the document to print with a small margin on the sides while including all columns on one page.
- Ensure that **Landscape Orientation** is selected for the best view for all documentation tools (POs and KSAs).
- OPTIONAL STEP: Once the print settings are updated, the user can navigate out of the print settings area back to the main excel menu. On the main excel page, there is a small icon at the bottom right hand side of the screen next to the zoom % called "**Page Break Preview**". This allows users to change the page breaks to ensure that each SNC appears on its own page and isn't cut off or separated into two pages.



- It looks like this:

Documenting orientee progress

Q: How often do the preceptors need to document on the SNC PO Weekly Progress Notes: Orientee & Preceptor?

A: AACN defers to you as to the frequency you want the preceptor to document on the form.

What we recommend is that the preceptor/orienteer address items on the progress notes as they arise and jot notes. They could use the same form for a grouping of shifts or for a timeframe you determine.

AACN does not expect the preceptor and orientee to document on every item every shift, just the items that are addressed during that shift or grouping of shifts. That way over time the sheet is showing their progress.

Q: How often do the preceptors need to document on the KSA lists?

A: KSA's are completed at intervals set by you and your orientation process. You know your orientation process best so AACN leaves that up to you. The KSA list was created and mapped from the [Essentials of Critical Care Orientation](#) (ECCO) to identify what needs to be completed in orientation to help educators realize they don't need to include everything in orientation.

Q: How does a preceptor document on a KSA if the experience isn't clinically available

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A: Use the scores “No opportunity” or “Return/verbal demo” . Have the preceptor make a comment in the comment section as to how the information was covered with the orientee. For example, return demonstration/demonstration, discussion, simulation, etc.

Q: Do we need to use the AACN KSA checklist? We have our own KSA checklist that we currently use.

A: The AACN KSA list was created as an recommended tool to help units streamline the massive list of KSAs some units have adopted. This was done to help units (and new educators) reduce the # of KSAs they were trying to fit into orientation to only focus on the essentials. This decreases the cognitive load of the orientee, and the additional KSAs the unit finds important can be addressed after orientation is complete. The life-long learning journey of nursing means there will always be new information and skills as we progress.

Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN)/Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Scope of Practice

Q: Are we able to include LVN/LPN orientees using the AACN Competence Framework?

A: AACN has not validated the SNC POs and KSA for the LVN/LPN scope of practice. We have found that Nurse Practice Acts vary by state in how they define the scope of LVN/LPN scope of practice. There are POs and KSAs that AACN believes would not fit the LVN/LPN scope of practice. In the future AACN foresees there may be a need to create competency tool versions that are consistent with LVN/LPN scope of practice.