LANDMARK STATEMENT
FROM THE
AMERICAN NURSES’ ASSOCIATION COUNCIL
ON CONTINUING EDUCATION

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An Interim Statement on
Continuing Education in Nursing

Today, people in the United States consider health care a fundamental right. As standards and expectations rise, it becomes increasingly evident that adequate health services cannot be delivered without the full participation of well-prepared nurses who systematically build upon their basic preparation through lifelong learning in the art and science of their profession. The American Nurses’ Association endorses the concept of continuing education for all registered nurses as one of the means by which nurses can maintain competence and meet the standards of practice developed by the profession. With the rapid emergence of new knowledge and technologies and continuing social changes, a concerted effort must be made to assist each nurse to develop and improve their practice and to exercise leadership in effecting changes in health delivery services.

Definition of
Continuing Education in Nursing

Continuing education in nursing consists of systematic learning experiences designed to enlarge the knowledge and skills of nurses. As distinct from education toward an academic degree or preparing as a beginning professional practitioner, continuing professional education activities have more specific content applicable to the individual’s immediate goals; are generally of shorter duration; are sponsored by colleges, universities, health agencies and professional organizations; and may be conducted in a variety of settings.

Responsibilities for
Continuing Education

Association

The American Nurses’ Association develops standards for nursing education and devises methods for gaining their acceptance and implementation through appropriate channels.* Another responsibility of the professional association is to assure that opportunities for continuing education for nurses are provided, and where there are unmet needs, stimulate collaboration of educational institutions with agencies and

*ANA Bylaws, Article XII, Section 7.
organizations in developing sound educational opportunities. Effective continuing education depends upon a cooperative relationship between the professional association, the provider of continuing education programs, and the learner.

**Individual**

The primary responsibility for maintaining competence in professional nursing practice must be assumed by the individual. The identification of personal goals and aspirations must precede the definition of individual learning needs. Careful planning of short-term and long-range career goals will then direct the nurse toward the selection and use of appropriate educational resources.

**Faculty**

The faculty of preparatory programs in nursing has a special responsibility to assist students to undertake a commitment to lifelong learning and to identify educational resources. To fulfill this responsibility, the faculty should serve as role models of lifelong learning for professional practice. The primary responsibility of the nurse educator in continuing education is to develop, in collaboration with those who have demonstrated excellence in nursing practice, quality educational programs which build upon the knowledge and experience of nurse learners. Emphasis must be placed on opportunities for acquiring knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and habits of mind which will move the learner toward self-actualization that is essential to the improvement of nursing practice and career satisfaction. Translating educational needs into systematic learning experiences is the major task of this educator. Another significant responsibility of the nurse educator in continuing education is to collaborate with professionals in the health and related fields to develop interdisciplinary continuing education.

**Employing Agencies**

Health care organizations have a significant role, in close collaboration with educational institutions, of planning and implementing continuing education.

The primary responsibility of the employing agency in continuing education is to afford the employee opportunities to continue the employee's education and development as a member of the health care team. Responsibility and accountability for improving nursing practice through continuing education should be shared by both employer and employee. An appropriate system of recognition and reward should be established.

**Guidelines for Conduct of Continuing Education in Nursing**

1. Programs of continuing education should be relevant to both the educational needs of the learners and the health needs of the consumer. Program planners, learners and consumers of health services should participate in identifying these needs.

2. The continuing education program should be consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization and each specific continuing education activity should be designed to implement them.

3. The effectiveness of continuing education programs and the determination of learning activities is dependent on continuous monitoring of learning experiences of basic, preparatory and higher degree programs in nursing.
4. An interdisciplinary approach to sponsoring, planning, and implementing continuing educational activities should be encouraged.

5. The specified budget should make adequate provision for planning, conducting, and evaluating of the continuing education program.

6. Continuing education programs for nurses should be developed under the direction of competent nurses who are skilled in designing and implementing the many different kinds of learning experiences.

7. The faculty should be especially knowledgeable about concepts of adult learning and experienced in the application of these concepts. Care should be exercised to assure consistent involvement of individuals, as faculty, who have expertise in the content to be presented.

8. Continuing educational activities may be implemented through a variety of formats and teaching methodologies to achieve the teaching learning objectives, i.e. workshops, institutes, conferences, systematic independent study.

9. Objectives should be defined for each continuing education program and used as a basis for determining content, learning experiences, and evaluation.

10. Continuing education programs should assist registered nurse learners to:
    —acquire new knowledge and skills
    —update basic knowledge
    —prepare for re-entry into practice
    —make a transition from one area of practice to another
    —acquire greater depth of knowledge and skills in one particular area of nursing
    —change attitudes and values
    —implement concepts of change both within the individual's own practice and throughout the health care delivery system
    —assume responsibility for personal and professional development
    —improve the ability of other health care workers to meet the specific needs of the public served by the health agency
    —promote and support innovation and creativity in health services.

11. Provision for continuous evaluation should be an integral element of the overall continuing education program and of each specific activity within the program. Sponsoring agencies, learners and consumers of health services should collaborate in evaluating the effectiveness of the continuing education program.

12. The time allotted to any continuing education activity should be sufficient to insure coverage of the content, development of defined skills, opportunity for reflection, and other identified goals.

13. The sponsoring agency should provide facilities and resources appropriate to the content of the program, such as audiovisual aids, libraries, learning laboratories, conference rooms and secretarial services.

14. Counseling and guidance should be made available so that learners will be informed of the range of continuing education opportunities that may meet their immediate and long-range career goals.

15. Continuing education records should be maintained in a systematic manner. (Reference:* The Organizing Group statement on use of the ceu in nursing education.)

also see: