RCH Nursing Preceptorship Model

**Introduction**

At the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH), a preceptor is defined as an experienced practitioner, who is formally assigned for a fixed period of time, to provide transitional support, to an undergraduate or clinician, into a new practice setting, through role modelling, teaching, and socialising.

This definition was generated from literature on preceptorship (Alspach, 2000; Baltimore, 2004; McLoughen, O'Brien, & Jackson; 2006, Morton Cooper, 2000) and critical discussion within the RCH Preceptorship Working Group. This ensures that the definition matches the model at the RCH.

**Guiding Principles and Elements of the Preceptorship Model**

**Role of the preceptor**

The identification of the preceptor’s role at the RCH has come from the literature and participants in the Preceptorship Program at the RCH. Alspach’s (2000) framework in which the primary roles of the preceptor are identified as role model, educator and socialiser, is used and expanded on to make clear the role at the RCH.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATOR</th>
<th>ROLE MODEL</th>
<th>SOCIALISER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Recognise the capabilities of the preceptee</td>
<td>• Know the legal boundaries</td>
<td>• Help the preceptee feel welcome to the ward</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adapt to different learning styles</td>
<td>• Act within own capabilities</td>
<td>• Support the preceptee to feel safe in the work environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Determine “competence”</td>
<td>• Keep self professionally developed</td>
<td>• Facilitate the preceptee’s inclusion into the team</td>
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<td>• Be accountable for what is taught</td>
<td>• Promote Evidence Based Practice</td>
<td>• Help the preceptee feel empowered</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Facilitate learning</td>
<td>• Have a sound clinical knowledge</td>
<td>• Have a knowledge of the work environment and it’s processes</td>
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<td>• Assess &amp; Evaluate</td>
<td>• Explain</td>
<td>• Understand colleagues’ roles</td>
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<td>• Provide constructive feedback</td>
<td>• Link theory to practice</td>
<td>• Requires effective communication skills, both written and verbal</td>
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<td>• Assist with development of realistic learning objectives</td>
<td>• Stimulate critical thinking</td>
<td>• Adaptable to different personality types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote self-directed learning</td>
<td>• Resolve conflict</td>
<td>• Personal attributes such as: Supportive, Available, Approachable, Empathetic, Self aware, Patient, Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain</td>
<td>• Trouble shoot</td>
<td>• Requires effective communication skills, both written and verbal</td>
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1 The RCH Nursing Preceptorship Model is intended to support the RCH Nursing Competency Framework. As such those implementing nursing preceptorship should also be familiar with the requirements of RCH Nursing Competency Framework.
Criteria for selecting preceptors
Based on the identified role of the preceptor, the following criteria should be used when selecting preceptors, either through self selection or identification by another (for example Nurse Unit Manager or Clinical Nurse Educator / Facilitator).

<table>
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<th>ROLE MODEL</th>
<th>SOCIALISER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates a capacity and interest in teaching others (for example parents, children and colleagues)</td>
<td>• Performs within scope of practice.</td>
<td>• Works well as part of the team.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates commitment to professional development.</td>
<td>• Has an understanding of the environment and culture.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Requires effective communication skills, both written and verbal.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adaptable to different personality types.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal attributes such as: Supportive, Available, Approachable, Empathetic, Self aware, Patient, Sensitive.</td>
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</table>

Please note. For preceptorship to be successful the preceptor should want to take on the role.

Wherever possible a preceptor should work a minimum of 0.6 EFT. In instances where more than one preceptor is allocated an effective communication plan must be in place to ensure continuity for the preceptee’s development.

TrendCare should be used to capture information regarding staff who have completed the Preceptorship Program and/or acted as preceptors. The Mackinnon Nursing Education and Development Centre will take responsibility for entering any participants in the Preceptorship Program into TrendCare. Wards will be responsible for maintaining currency of information on TrendCare regarding staff working as preceptors.

Assigning preceptors to preceptees
When assigning preceptor / preceptee pairs, matching on the basis of personality types and learning styles can enhance effectiveness and satisfaction (Baltimore, 2004). However the reality is that often the learning style and personality type of the preceptee is unknown. In addition pairing is often based on who is available and able to work as a preceptor.

Consideration should be given to the level of experience of the preceptee and preceptor. There are benefits associated with assigning a preceptor that has had recent experience (within 2-3 years) of the preceptee’s situation (e.g. completion of a Graduate Nurse Program or Post Graduate studies).

Duration of Preceptorship
• As stated in the definition, preceptorship is entered into for a defined period of time.
  o For program participants (i.e. Undergraduate nurses, Graduate Nurse Program [GNP], Career Advancement Year [CAY], Post Graduate students) preceptorship incorporates the duration of the preceptee’s placement.
  o For permanent new staff preceptorship incorporates the duration of the preceptee’s probationary period.
Meetings

- The preceptor and preceptee should
  - Have the opportunity to meet prior to the preceptee starting
  - Discuss expectations and establish ways of working
  - Meet at least weekly during the familiarisation period
  - Meet at least monthly for the duration of the preceptorship relationship

- Protected time should be allocated for preceptors and preceptees to meet. The focus of these meetings will incorporate feedback regarding
  - progress to date,
  - evidence of learning,
  - progress with nursing competencies, and
  - ongoing review of objectives.

- In instances where it is impossible to arrange face to face meetings, the preceptor and preceptee should identify alternative means of communication or put another action plan in place.

- Documentation of monthly meetings should be included in the Professional Practice Portfolio.

Supernumerary time and familiarisation

Supernumerary time is allocated as per the RCH Nursing Competency Framework (2010).

- Graduate Nurse Program (GNP), Career Advancement Year (CAY) participants, and new staff will be rostered the same shifts as their preceptor during the supernumerary period when sharing a workload (see table 1).
- Post Graduate students will be rostered the same shifts as their preceptor for a period of one week at the commencement of each new rotation / placement. This includes any allocated supernumerary time (See table 1).
- Undergraduate nurses will be assigned to work with their preceptor for the duration of their clinical placement, ranging from two to seven weeks in length. The Undergraduate nurse will not be part of the staffing numbers each shift.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Nurses experience</th>
<th>Maximum supernumerary time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PICU, NNU, ED, Perioperative</td>
<td>New Graduate</td>
<td>Up to 10 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced but new to above areas</td>
<td>Up to 6 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced in above areas</td>
<td>Up to 4 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCH @ Home</td>
<td>Experienced in community</td>
<td>Up to 4 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced with no community</td>
<td>Up to 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other RCH areas</td>
<td>New Graduate</td>
<td>Up to 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced but new to Paediatrics</td>
<td>Up to 2 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paediatric experienced but new to RCH</td>
<td>Up to 1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RCH internal transfers</td>
<td>Up to 2 shifts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During familiarisation, consideration must be given to the preceptor’s workload in order to ensure adequate support and teaching for the preceptee.

- The preceptor should not be
  - scheduled to take on additional duties or responsibilities
  - allocated a workload considered inappropriate for the preceptee

- The preceptor should be
  - allocated patients or work in close proximity to the preceptee
Appraisals
Preceptors play a key role in providing ongoing feedback (oral and written) regarding the preceptee’s development. Appraisals are the responsibility of the manager who may seek input from preceptors and Clinical Nurse Educators / Facilitators.

Support and Recognition
Support and recognition for preceptors will be provided. This will include:

- Opportunity to participate in the Preceptorship Program
- Additional support provided from outside the clinical area
- Access to and support in using tools
- Provision of ongoing development opportunities
- Recognition through:
  - letter of appreciation
  - acknowledgement in communications, and
  - identification of their contribution through appraisal process

In instances where a preceptee or preceptor is unhappy with any situation, the Support Matrix (Figure 1) outlines the steps that should be followed. For undergraduates, more detailed information and matrices are contained in “Management and reporting of performance concerns for undergraduate nurses on clinical placement at RCH” and “Managing and reporting of undergraduate nurse incidents during clinical placement at RCH”.

Preceptorship Training & Development
The Mackinnon Nursing Education and Development Centre offers a Preceptorship Program that supports the development of preceptors. The aim of the Preceptorship Program is to assist new preceptors in developing skills to support the transition of nurses into a new area of practice. The Preceptorship Program provides foundation theoretical knowledge with a focus on developing skills and providing strategies for managing the practical aspects of preceptorship.

The Preceptorship Program is conducted over two days. The key modules within the program are:

- Preceptor roles and responsibilities
- Theories of learning and skill acquisition
- Evidence based practice
- Determining competence
- Understanding learning styles and personality types
- Formulating learning objectives
- Creating a professional development plan
- Facilitating development of others
- Assessing performance
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Dealing with conflict

Additional modules will be developed as needs are identified.

To attend the program an application form must be completed. This can be accessed via the [http://www.rch.org.au/mcpc/practice_dev.cfm?doc_id=11864](http://www.rch.org.au/mcpc/practice_dev.cfm?doc_id=11864)
**Evaluation**

Annual evaluation and review of the preceptorship model will occur.

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*The Mackinnon Centre can be contacted via email ([mackinnon.education@rch.org.au](mailto:mackinnon.education@rch.org.au)) or on extension 6716. Information or request for support will be forwarded promptly to the most appropriate Mackinnon Centre team member.*
References


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