DETECTING
THE **RIGHT FIT**

HOW AN ACCREDITED NURSE RESIDENCY PROGRAM
CAN EASE YOUR TRANSITION TO PRACTICE

**COMPLETE
WITH
INTERVIEW
PREP
QUESTIONS!**

Meagan White, PhD, RNC
Sheri Cosme, DNP, RN-BC
Cory Church, PhD, RN

CONTENTS

REFERENCES

American Nurses Credentialing Center. (2019). 2020 *ANCC PTAP Accreditation Application Manual.* Silver Spring, MD: Author.

Duchscher, J.B. (2008). A process of becoming: The Stages of new nursing graduate professional role transition. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 39(1), 441-450.

Fink, R., Krugman, M., Casey, K., & Goode, C. (2008). The Graduate nurse experience: Qualitative residency program outcomes. *The Journal of Nursing Administration*; 38(7/8), 341-348.

Franquiz, R., & Seckman, C. (2016). Organizational readiness for nurse residency accreditation. *Journal for Nurses in Professional Development*, 32(6), 309-315.

IOM (Institute of Medicine). (2011). The Future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Kramer, M. (1974). *Reality shock: Why nurses leave nursing*. St. Louis, MO: CV Mosby.

Williams, C.A., Goode, C.J., Krsek, C., Bednash, G.D., and Lynn, M.R. (2007). Post baccalaureate nurse residency 1-year outcomes. *The Journal of Nursing Administration*; 37(7/8), 357-365.

BEGIN YOUR INVESTIGATION: DETECTING ORGANIZATIONAL FIT

You may be preparing for graduation and seeking your first nursing job. Or you may be dreaming of your first nursing job and the impact you hope to have on patients. Regardless of your mindset or situation, it's important to explore your options before you enter your initial employment transition into the nursing profession.

In considering your organizational fit, we recommend reflecting on your own work experiences, personal values, and vision for your nursing career. Think about the type of area where you prefer to live and work to identify your preference for an urban, rural, or suburban setting and determine organizational employment options. Reflecting on your living preferences will help you pinpoint key aspects of an organization, hospital, and residency program that best align with your desired work environment.

> We recommend reflecting on your own work experiences, personal values, and vision for your nursing career.

▶ Do you have a specific workplace setting or type of specialty nursing in mind for your first job?

▶ Consider that geographic location of an organization can affect availability of jobs on specialty nursing units and/or the level of trauma services offered by a hospital.

After narrowing your potential employer list based on your living and workplace setting preferences, you should explore the mission, vision, and values of the organization and/or health system for personal congruence.

▶ Does the organization's mission, vision, and values align with your own?

Focus next on exploring the organization's nursing recognition and awards for excellence. Investigate the importance, visibility, and impact of nursing within the organization.

▶ Has the organization been recognized for its nursing excellence through ANCC, including Magnet®, Pathway to Excellence®, and/or primary/joint accreditation.

▶ Does the organization have an academic affiliation?

▶ What is the applied model of nursing care and work environment/culture?

MISSION POSSIBLE: NURSE RESIDENCIES AND PTAP ACCREDITATION

Now that you have learned how to detect proper organizational fit, you are ready to explore how a nurse residency program can ease your transition to practice.

The transition into nursing practice is described as an evolving process of adjustment and learning phases (Duchscher, 2008). The new nurse enters an initial "shock" period, followed by a "crisis" phase where doubting and questioning set in, and eventually a renewed inspiration leads to an upward "knowing" phase of exploration and acceptance. Although Duchscher's (2008) theory of Transition Shock was recently developed, issues related to transitioning into nursing practice are well-documented in nursing literature after Kramer's (1974) seminal publication on reality shock. Traditional nursing orientation programs were designed to help with this transition (Franquiz & Seckman, 2016) and included an introduction to the organization, brief training on essential skills and policies common to the workplace, and a short amount of time spent with an experienced nurse on the practice unit.

Given new technologies, ambiguities in the healthcare environment, and increased complexities in nursing care, an urgent need emerged to create supportive and more comprehensive programs to ensure a safe and healthy transition for newly licensed nurses. Based on emerging issues in healthcare, the Institute of Medicine (IOM;2011) established its landmark report: *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. In this report, the IOM called for the development and expansion of residency programs to better prepare the future nursing workforce.

A nurse residency program is much more robust and comprehensive than a traditional orientation program. Nurse residency programs are "planned, comprehensive periods of time during which registered nurses can acquire the knowledge and skills to deliver safe, quality care in a specific clinical setting" (Institute of Medicine, 2011).

▶ **The transition from student nurse to newly licensed registered nurse is an important time period marked with ups and downs.**

  ■ **Nurse residency programs are designed to smooth that transition process for you.**

As the number and type of newly licensed nurse residencies have increased, so has variation in program delivery. Residency program accreditation was developed to help provide structure and standardization for developing programs while simultaneously evaluating the quality of existing programs (ANCC, 2019).

Accreditation is a voluntary, peer-reviewed process that can be undertaken by organizations who offer nurse residency programs (ANCC, 2019). ANCC has long been recognized as the voice of excellence for nursing practice.

Over time, research and evidence-based practice has indicated elements of nurse residency program structures and processes that best support a newly licensed nurse's transition. These elements are woven into the five domains developed under the ANCC PTAP conceptual model. If successful in achieving accreditation, a nurse residency program has demonstrated excellence in the ANCC PTAP standards.

Why is accreditation important when considering a program?

Accreditation ensures several hallmarks including: a high-quality transition program that meets national standards of excellence, a significant organizational commitment to professional development, and program engagement in continuous quality improvement through re-accreditation processes. If an organization does not have an accredited program, it is important to still consider if key elements of transition support are in place. Ultimately, your detective skills will help determine your best fit.

## PRACTICE TRANSITION ACCREDITATION PROGRAM® CONCEPTUAL MODEL
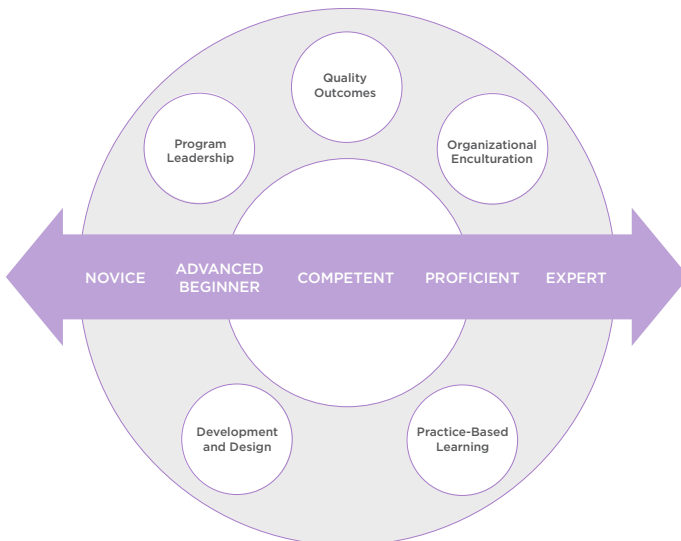
EXAMINING A RESIDENCY: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Nurse residencies may use the ANCC PTAP conceptual model as a framework to develop or revise their programs. The PTAP standards guide residency programs through a review process that helps develop a robust infrastructure and ensure that all essential components of a successful transition to practice are met for nurse residents. Although nursing organizations have the onus of developing high-quality residency programs, the responsibility of protecting your professional practice transition rests in the depth of your investigation.

▶ **You likely wouldn't go on a blind date without investigating or interviewing your potential match. Honing your organizational and residency research skills will no doubt help you determine the right, long-term fit.**

Using the five PTAP accreditation domains as a guide in your career quest, the interview prep tool supplement in the back of this booklet provides questions to grow your residency program review skills as a savvy nursing consumer and researcher.
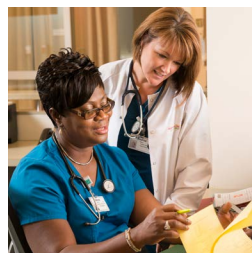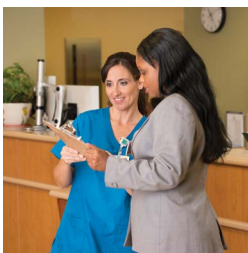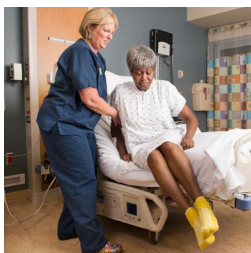

CONSIDER, INVESTIGATE, AND ASK ABOUT:
DOMAINS OF PROGRAM LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL ENCULTURATION, AND DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

The first three PTAP domains, Program Leadership, Organizational Enculturation, and Development and Design, focus on leadership of the residency program and its processes to successfully onboard and socialize you into the organization. Questions in these sections of the interview tool supplement will help you determine basic elements of organizational and program fit.

While browsing the organization's website, see if you can find information

> Primarily, you should investigate the length of the program, how the curriculum was chosen or designed, and whether the program is accredited.
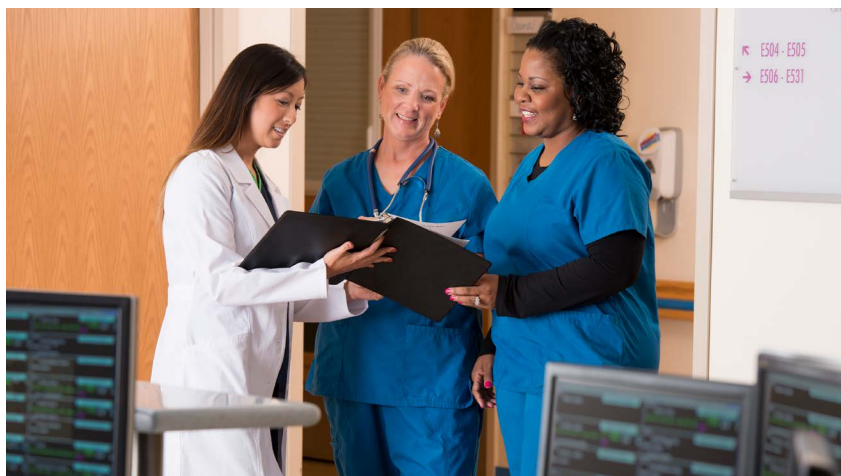
about the nurse residency program. Take notes and be prepared in your interview to ask important questions about the programs' leadership and structure. Garnering knowledge about the history of the program, its curriculum, and key stakeholders will help you better understand its current configuration.

▶ **Primarily, you should investigate the length of the program, how the curriculum was chosen or designed, and whether the program is accredited.**

▶ **It's important to note that programs may use a curriculum purchased from a vendor such as AACN/Vizient or Versant.**

  ■ **It's a common misconception that programs using a vendor curriculum automatically achieve accreditation of their residency.**

  ■ **Although vendors offer support for structuring and operating a residency program, accreditation requires a separate review process be conducted evaluating the overall program against standards. PTAP accreditation does not require use of vendor curricula by the organization.**

Programs can also vary in their design, as some offer specific placement and hiring directly onto a specialized nursing unit. While others may require nurses to rotate through all units during the residency prior to determining clinical placements for employment. If you have a specific nursing specialty in mind, the latter type of program may not appeal to your career plan.

You will also want to investigate what types of learning activities you will be exposed to and/or projects you are expected to complete

as part of the residency. Many residency programs culminate in a portfolio or evidence-based practice project in their final months.

Lastly, ask about your transition support team.

▶ **How are you supported by the program director, nurse educators, unit preceptors, managers, and/or mentors?**

▶ **Who will you interact with throughout your experiences in the transition to practice program?**

Again, some of this information may be publically available on the organization's website, via a program pamphlet or handbook, or by contacting the nursing education department leaders.

CONSIDER, INVESTIGATE, AND ASK ABOUT:
DOMAINS OF PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING AND QUALITY OUTCOMES

The last two domains of Practice-Based Learning and Quality Outcomes, as well as the overarching concept of nursing professional development, focus on the development of your knowledge, skills, and abilities as a professional nurse. These PTAP domains help cement your commitment to the organization as they establish the residency as the foundation for lifelong learning as a professional nurse. Prompts in these last sections of the interview supplement should help you determine aspects of organizational support necessary for your initial transition to practice and uncover tools for future use when navigating your subsequent career chapters.

A vital area to investigate, both prior to and during your interview, centers on practice-based learning or the "learning that will take place in the practice setting under the guidance of preceptors, mentors, or other experienced healthcare professionals" (ANCC, pg. 30, 2019). Questions in this domain of the interview prep tool will help you explore how the organization and residency program can build your competence in performing fundamental nursing processes.

▶ **Investigate how your unit-based practice learning will be structured.**

▶ **Ask how you will be assigned a preceptor on your practice unit.**

▶ **Find out how your performance will be evaluated and how often you can expect feedback about your progress.**

  ▪ **Consider asking if specific tools are used to guide expectations of your progression.**

Next, examine the support available to assist you through many of the common issues of transition that are well-documented in nursing literature and research. Fundamental studies of nurse residency programs (Fink, Krugman, Casey, & Goode, 2008; Williams et al., 2007) underscore the importance of program support during times in your transition when you are more likely to experience dips in job satisfaction and confidence.

▶ **Find out how the residency will support your well-being and help you prepare for the challenges of nursing practice.**

▶ **Look for support in areas to address common challenges in nursing such as time management, communication on an interprofessional team, and ethical dilemmas so that you can develop and sharpen your critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills over time.**

The last few questions in this area of the interview tool supplement are designed for you to explore what opportunities are available to keep you connected and growing in your organization. It's important for you to investigate if participation in the residency program has any contract requirements. Finally, you'll focus on sustaining your professional development within the organization. These robust and high-quality programs will be able to connect you with opportunities for lifelong learning in their organizations and keep you engaged in the continual improvement of patient care delivery and patient health outcomes (ANCC, 2019).

IDENTIFY YOUR FACT-FINDING RESOURCES

It may seem daunting to consider such a wide-range of qualities in your future employer; however, there are many information sources available to you to assist you on this journey.

▶ Start by exploring organizational websites to locate answers for your basic inquiries. Navigate to the nursing department, education, or nursing excellence pages of the site where you may find materials relating to the residency program.

▶ Ask your contacts about their experiences with the organization or residency to gather insight into the program's culture and reputation.

  ■ Explore and uncover other print and local news sources for information about the organization and its impact on the community.

  ■ Identify any personal connections you may have with the organization — converse with undergraduate nursing instructors and current/former nurse residents who have participated in the residency to get an insider's perspective on program strengths and areas for improvement.

Finally, examine the organizational statistics on recognitions or awards for nursing excellence. Look to the websites provided in the interview tool supplement on the following pages to determine if the organization is currently recognized for nursing excellence through ANCC, the voice of global excellence among practicing nurses. A list of ANCC credentialing programs have been provided within the interview tool supplement for your exploration.

YOUR JOURNEY AWAITS!

Finding your first job as a nurse should be exciting. You have control of your future and opportunities are limitless when you find the right organization and nursing residency program. The transition from new graduate to practicing nurse will be one of *many* periods of change that you will go through in nursing.

You may look for a high-performing organization to have these key markers of nursing excellence beyond just their residency program.

▶ When you interview potential nurse residency programs, ask if they have fellowship programs that will help you progress or expand your career within the organization.

  ■ Unlike residency programs that focus on your initial transition to practice, fellowship programs target experienced nurses and nurse practitioners.

  ■ Fellowships are vital to sustaining nursing excellence, as these emerging programs are designed to help seasoned nurses gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities to transition into new practice roles.

▶ Examine nursing continuing professional development (NCPD) opportunities within the organization. Investigate if the organization is accredited by the ANCC as a provider of NCPD activities.

We hope that you will use the tips and interview tool supplement to help you navigate the first steps of your professional nursing journey. Establishing a strong professional foothold through an accredited nurse residency will help you grow deep roots in your community and organization.

You determine your future career path in nursing. It is bright. You are ready. The American Nurses Credentialing Center, the voice of nursing excellence, welcomes you to nursing!

NOTES

INTERVIEW PREP TOOL

A GUIDE TO ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS WHEN EXAMINING A NURSE RESIDENCY PROGRAM

ANCC

AMERICAN NURSES CREDENTIALING CENTER

**PRACTICE TRANSITION
ACCREDITATION PROGRAM®**

LOOKING FOR YOUR FIRST JOB?

Consider, investigate, or ask about these elements of a nurse residency program based on domains of PTAP accreditation.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

CONSIDER

Do nurses hold leadership positions in the organization? Look for nurses in executive roles to hold high-level leadership positions in administration.

INVESTIGATE

Who leads the nurse residency program?

ORGANIZATIONAL ENCULTURATION

CONSIDER

What are you looking for in an organization?

Check the full lists of ANCC recognized organizations at **www.nursingworld.org/organizational-programs**

• Search for indicators of nursing excellence:
  — Magnet® recognition
  — Pathway to Excellence® designation
  — Accredited provider of NCPD
  — Accredited PTAP RN Residency
• Academic affiliation or teaching hospital?
• Community hospital or large, urban medical center?
• Faith-based mission of organization?
• Union or non-union environment?
• Models of nursing care: Team nursing or primary nursing?
• Geographic location (urban, rural, or suburban area?)

What is the average age of the nursing staff?

What is the social culture of nurses on the unit, department, organization, and/or residency?

INVESTIGATE

What are the mission, vision, and values of the organization; of the nurse residency program? Do they align with your own values and vision for your nursing career?

DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

INVESTIGATE

What is the curriculum and layout of the residency program?

• When was the program started? How long is the current residency program?
• How was the curriculum chosen? *Note: Programs may use a curriculum that they purchased from a vendor such as AACN/Vizient or Versant. Use of a vendor curriculum alone does not indicate accreditation of the residency program.*

DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

- What type of learning activities will you participate in? What projects are you expected to complete?

PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING

INVESTIGATE

How does the organization structure your unit-based learning? Will you be assigned a specific preceptor on your practice unit?

What processes are used to evaluate your progression as a resident? How often will you be given feedback about your progress?

- Are there specific nursing competencies you are expected to achieve?
- How long is your unit-based orientation?
- What is the process for learning remediation (i.e. what happens when you or your preceptor identify a knowledge/skill/attitude gap in your learning?)

NURSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CONSIDER

Are there contract expectations of participating in the residency program? What other NCPD opportunities does the organization offer aside from the residency? How will the organization help you grow throughout your lifespan as a nurse?

INVESTIGATE

Does the organization offer scholarships, tuition reimbursement, or loan forgiveness?

Is the organization an accredited provider of NCPD?

QUALITY OUTCOMES

CONSIDER

How is the program designed to impact your transition to practice? Is the residency program accredited?

- The ANCC PTAP® program is the largest accreditor of transition to practice programs in nursing, as ANCC is the globally recognized voice of nursing excellence.
- Download the full list of ANCC PTAP at **www.nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/accreditation/find-an-accredited-organization**

INVESTIGATE

How is the residency program evaluated? Will you be given the opportunity to provide feedback about all aspects of the program?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

Who will you report to as a new-to-practice nurse resident:

☐ The Residency Program Director
☐ A Specific Unit Manager

ORGANIZATIONAL ENCULTURATION

Are you hired directly to a specific unit as a nurse resident or do you float/rotate through on numerous units during the residency?

DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

Who will be involved in supporting your educational and practice needs as a resident?

☐ Program Director   ☐ Managers
☐ Nurse Educators   ☐ Mentors
☐ Unit Preceptors

PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING

What support structures are in place to assist you with common issues related to practice transition including:

☐ Stress Management/Well-Being
☐ Time Management
☐ Communication Skills and Interprofessional
   Team Dynamics
☐ Critical Thinking and Clinical Reasoning Skills
☐ Ethical Decision-Making

NURSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What formal or informal support systems exist in the organization as you transition into different roles throughout your nursing career?

Does the organization have an RN Fellowship for experienced nurses?

Is the RN fellowship accredited?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

QUALITY OUTCOMES

How has the program changed over time?

What outcome data does the residency program track and report?

ANCC

AMERICAN NURSES CREDENTIALING CENTER

**PRACTICE TRANSITION
ACCREDITATION PROGRAM®**

8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3492
1.800.284.2378
nursingworld.org/ptap