Essential Behaviors for Nursing Students

Essential behaviors refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities and competencies required for safe, satisfactory completion of all aspects of the nursing program. These behaviors are non-domain specific, i.e., those physical and mental activities and attributes needed by a nurse to practice safely in terms of essential nursing functions. Students in the nursing program must demonstrate competence in the following categories of behavior in order to successfully meet the program learning objectives. Inability to demonstrate competency with or without accommodations, may prevent a student from successfully completing the requirements of the program.

Clinical facilities utilized in the training of nursing students may have additional requirements that if not met, may result in the student’s inability to complete a clinical course and the nursing program.

The Yakima Valley Community College Nursing Program signifies that the holder of the ADN degree has been educated to competently practice nursing in all healthcare settings and to apply for RN licensure in the State of Washington. The education of a nurse requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment through patient care experiences in preparation for independent, semi-autonomous practice where making appropriate decisions is required. The practice of nursing emphasizes collaboration among physicians, nurses, allied health care professionals and the patient.

The curriculum leading to the ADN requires students to engage in diverse, complex, and specific experiences to the acquisition and practice of essential nursing skills and functions. Unique combinations of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, physical, and social abilities are required to satisfactorily perform these functions. These functions are necessary to ensure the health and safety of patients, peers, faculty and other healthcare providers.

The essential behaviors following this paragraph are necessary to acquire or demonstrate competence in a discipline as complex as nursing. These behaviors are in addition to the standards of behavior and academic conduct set forth in the YVCC Code of Students Rights and Responsibilities (published on the College's web site).
**Motor Skills**
Students should have sufficient motor function so that they are able to execute movements required to provide general care and treatment to patients in all health care settings. [For example: For the safety and protection of the patients, the student must be able to perform basic life support, including CPR, and function in an emergency situation. The student must have the ability, within reasonable limits, to safely assist a patient in moving, for example, from a chair to a bed, or from a wheelchair to a commode. Additionally, students must demonstrate competent computer skills including word processing.]

**Sensory/Observation**
A student must be able to acquire the information presented through demonstrations and experiences in the basic and nursing sciences. He or she must be able to observe a patient accurately, at a distance and close at hand, and observe and appreciate non-verbal communications when performing nursing assessment and intervention or administering medications. The student must be capable of perceiving the signs of disease and infection as manifested through physical examination. Such information is derived from images of the body surfaces, palpable changes in various organs and tissues, and auditory information (patient voice, heart tones, bowel and lung sounds).

**Communication**
The student must communicate effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, patients, family, and other professionals. He or she must express his or her ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and ability to give and receive feedback. A student must be able to: convey or exchange information at a level allowing development of a health history; identify problems presented; explain alternative solutions; and give directions during treatment and post-treatment. The student must be able to communicate effectively in oral and written forms. The student must be able to process and communicate information on the patient's status with accuracy in a timely manner to members of the health care team. The appropriate communication may also rely on the student's ability to make a correct judgment in seeking supervision and consultation in a timely manner.

**Cognitive**
A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize in the context of undergraduate nursing study. The student must be able to quickly read and comprehend extensive written material. He or she must also be able to evaluate and apply information and engage in critical thinking in the classroom and clinical setting.
Behavioral/Emotional
A student must possess the emotional health required for the full utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients and families. In addition, s/he must be able to maintain mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, students, faculty, staff and other professionals under all circumstances including highly stressful situations. The student must have the emotional stability to function effectively under stress and to adapt to an environment that may change rapidly without warning and/or in unpredictable ways. The student must be able to experience empathy for the situations and circumstances of others and effectively communicate that empathy. The student must know that his or her values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and experiences affect his or her perceptions and relationships with others. The student must be able and willing to examine and change his or her behavior when it interferes with productive individual or team relationships. The student must possess skills and experience necessary for effective and harmonious relationships in diverse academic and working environments.

Professional Conduct
Students must possess the ability to reason morally and practice nursing in an ethical manner. Students must be willing to learn and abide by professional standards of practice. Students must not engage in unprofessional conduct, and must possess attributes that include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, responsibility and tolerance. Students must be able to engage in patient care delivery in all settings and be able to deliver care to all patient populations including but not limited to children, adolescents, adults, developmentally disabled persons, medically compromised patients, and vulnerable adults.

Yakima Valley Community College is committed to supporting student success and provides opportunities for students to demonstrate these essential behaviors. If an applicant to the program or a student enrolled in the program believes he or she has a disability that could affect their demonstration of competence in one of the above categories, the student must see the ADA Coordinator, located in the Deccio Building, phone number 509-574-4961. To successfully complete the nursing program, the student must be able to demonstrate competence in their performance of all essential behaviors either with or without accommodation.