

Crisis: Disaster disrupts usual processes and the demand outweighs capacity

## Staff Education: Understanding the Health Corps Student Nurse

**Why** are nursing students being deployed at my facility?

In early April 2020, Governor Newsom issued an executive order designed to increase the California healthcare workforce in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of this executive order, a task force was established to design methods to effectively utilize nursing students in healthcare organizations as part of the care team. This has a legal precedent, as the California Nurse Practice Act states that in an emergency such as a pandemic, nursing services can be rendered by non-nursing personnel.

**Who** are they (what level of clinical experience)?

The California Board of Registered Nursing has released a guideline for utilization of nursing students at different levels in their clinical experience. Organizations will be receiving different levels of nursing students according to their individual needs. Refer to the California BRN document “Emergency Services Matrix” <https://www.rn.ca.gov/coronavirus.shtml> or posted at your organization.



**What** will they be doing?

Although the “Emergency Services Matrix” gives guidance on similar roles compared to experience level, they should be utilized as nursing students. Each student should have a copy of their *Skills Competency Checklist* with them and course syllabus with course/learning objectives and should discuss with their preceptor what procedures and other activities they will be engaged in. They should be assigned a preceptor and **should not be working in a role other than a nursing student (e.g. nurse assistant)**

**Where** are they coming from?

Students may be assigned to your organization through the California Emergency Workforce or through their academic institution. If they are coming from the academic institution, a similar workflow to how you normally precept students may be followed with special attention paid to safety measures in caring for the patient with Covid-19.

**How** have they been oriented so far?

Students coming from the California Emergency Workforce will likely have received a rapid orientation to the organization and will need much more on-the-job orientation. Do not assume that the individual has been oriented to all the nuances of the electronic health record and unit policies and procedures. Special attention should be paid during clinical time towards teaching proper handwashing technique and donning and doffing of PPE.