



# GUIDELINES FOR



the management of nursing work  
experience for school students

A Guide for Health Services

**NURSING**

**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

## **NSW HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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SHPN: (OCNO) 010143

ISBN: 0 7347 33387 2

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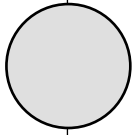
Locked Mail Bag 5003 Gladesville, NSW 2111

Tel. (02) 9816 0452

Fax. (02) 9816 0492

TTY. (02) 9391 9900

September 2001



# FOREWORD



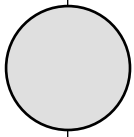
Nurses make up the largest group of health professionals and provide a twenty four hour, seven day a week service. The State Government is fully supportive of nurses and acknowledges the vital role that nurses play in the health care system.

We are committed to encouraging more school leavers and mature age entrants into nursing by informing them of the merits of this career. We need both men and women to consider nursing as a career. Work Experience provides an ideal opportunity to showcase the profession in a safe and appropriate way. It is an investment into the future of our nursing workforce.

It is also important to maintain partnerships with the Department of Education and Training to ensure that nursing receives the exposure it deserves in our schools.

This Guide contains all the relevant information needed to introduce nursing work experience into your health service.

Judith Meppem  
Chief Nursing Officer, NSW



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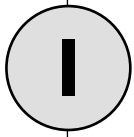
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# BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW FOR WORKPLACE LEARNING



The nursing workforce supply is dependent upon adequate numbers of nurses entering the health system each year. Work place learning, in particular work experience, is one of the most effective methods of showcasing nursing to potential recruits and has shown to be influential in determining career selection.<sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>

The Department of Health (DOH) advocates workplace learning and in particular nursing work experience. It has released Guidelines to support the implementation of nursing work experience.<sup>6</sup>

The DOH also maintains a range of nursing promotional materials that are regularly distributed to NSW schools, universities, TAFE colleges and health services throughout NSW.

Recent studies and reports on nurse recruitment, sponsored or conducted by the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer highlight the effectiveness of work experience.<sup>4 5</sup>

The benefits of adopting a positive approach to workplace learning and becoming active participants in nursing work experience for the NSW public health system include:

- strengthening links between Area Health Services (AHS's) and local schools and improving the AHS's profile in the community
- promoting the health care industry as an employer to the local community
- raising the profile of nursing as a career
- assisting in the selection of potential recruits

- enhancing the development of employees through participation in work place learning programs and contributing to the development of a committed and skilled nursing workforce.

For the student it enables them to:

- explore nursing as a career in the work environment
- observe and participate in the work of nurses so as to better understand the role
- identify entry points into nursing programs and employment opportunities
- appreciate the relevance of school studies to industry.

## Workplace learning

Workplace learning is a term used to describe all formal secondary school learning activities that occur within an industry setting.

Schools, in conjunction with industry, organise workplace learning into approved programs in which the work environment becomes an extension of the classroom. These programs are recognised as part of the school curriculum.

Students can participate in workplace learning either in a block release, where students spend a set amount of time (one or two weeks) in the workplace or day release where students spend part of their time each week in the workplace over several weeks.

Workplace learning may be classified as:

1. Work placement
2. Work experience.

## SCHOOL SECTORS DEFINED

There are three education sectors in NSW:

1. **Government (State) schools** which come under the auspices of the NSW Department of Education and Training.
2. **Catholic schools** which are supported by the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Board and the Catholic Education Office, Sydney.  
Some Catholic schools are classified as private or independent.
3. **Independent or private schools** which include some Catholic and other denominational schools that are independently governed.

While the principles of workplace learning apply across all education sectors and there is communication between them all, each has a slightly different approach to the organisation of work experience programs.

Work placement is for Year 11 and 12 students who are undertaking a school delivered, accredited, vocational course which has a mandatory industry-specific work placement component.

Students receive advanced standing into TAFE and industry training courses and a Vocational Education and Training credential for successfully completed subjects.<sup>7</sup>

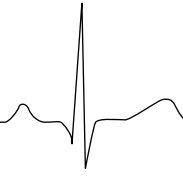
Work experience is for school students aged 14 years and over. It enables students to test their tentative career choices against the realities of the workplace.

Nursing work experience allows school students to explore nursing as a career choice, through supervised participation in the workplace and observation of nurses in real work situations.

### **Purpose of the Guide**

This Guide has been written for nurses by nurses, to facilitate the organisation of local work experience programs that are both safe and manageable, without compromising the delivery of nursing care or the efficiency of nursing services.

The Guide is available in printed form and on the Chief Nursing Officer's website at [www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing)



### **Overview of the responsibility for nursing work experience programs**

Attracting school leavers into nursing careers is a joint responsibility shared by the DOH, AHS's, Universities and the nursing profession. The provision of nursing work experience is a long term strategy which addresses this issue.

The successful implementation of a nursing work experience program is the responsibility of the AHS / Area Facilitator, Health Facility / Program Coordinator and clinical nurses.

### **Area Health Service responsibilities**

AHS endorsement of nursing work experience should occur in line with DOH policies, circulars, guidelines and report recommendations.

Many facilities are already active participants in work experience. Some of the existing programs in nursing are highly innovative and successful. State-wide participation would enhance the overall promotion of nursing as a career choice.

This commitment to work experience can be demonstrated through the development and implementation of policies on workplace learning and the allocation of adequate resources to support work experience programs. It is important for AHS's to communicate their commitment to providing nursing work experience to all target groups, through marketing and promotional activities.

### **Resource implications**

The implementation of a Nursing Work Experience Program (NWEPE) involves the allocation of personnel, time and other resources. The availability of resources should be determined and an analysis of the costs and associated outcomes undertaken before a program is developed.

Specific requirements for consideration include:

#### **1. Personnel**

- an AHS based nursing contact (Area Facilitator)
- a person at health facility level to coordinate the program (Program Coordinator)
- clinical nurses to supervise and support school students.

#### **2. Funding**

- A budget allocation is required for marketing, promoting and running the program, for supplies of facility brochures, identification badges and stationary requirements, as well as computer access for the Program Coordinator to prepare form letters and the establishment and maintenance of a database.

### **Role of the Area Facilitator**

In NSW, AHS's employ a nurse who as part of their role, has responsibility for marketing and promoting nursing to school students. It is appropriate that the Area Facilitator supports and oversees the implementation of nursing work experience programs.

More specifically, their role may include:

- establishing communication networks with local schools
- collaborating with health facilities in the AHS
- marketing and promoting the opportunities available to target audiences
- maintaining supplies of promotional materials
- collecting information in relation to nursing work experience programs across an AHS and facilitating communication exchange with nurses in the AHS
- analysing and reporting on work experience activities and their outcomes.

### **Health facility / Program Coordinator responsibilities**

Nursing work experience programs require the approval and support of the health facility executive. Support can be formalised by adaptation of the AHS policy on workplace learning into a local facility based policy on nursing work experience.

Within each health facility it is helpful to identify a nurse as the Program Coordinator for nursing work experience. The Program Coordinator should work collaboratively with the Area Facilitator to develop or review, market, promote and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

The health facility should consider what it can reasonably offer school students, without compromising the service being delivered and how it can monitor and evaluate the program. It is also important to consider ways to make the experience positive and meaningful for all parties.

### **Clinical nurses responsibilities**

Clinical nurses who are involved with work experience students have the responsibility of ensuring that the students are made to feel welcome and part of the workforce.

The attitude of nurses working in clinical areas is pivotal to the success of a NWE. They will influence the outcome of the experience in terms of the impression gained about nursing. It is for this reason that they need to be positive and enthusiastic in their outlook and willing participants in nursing work experience.

## INVOLVEMENT

Involvement in a NWE offers nurses:

- an opportunity to be identified as a positive nursing role model
- a chance to contribute to the marketing and promotion of nursing
- a greater awareness of the perceptions and aspirations of school students.

Nurses can contribute to the program by:

- identifying and addressing local barriers to its implementation
- contributing to its development
- determining the factors that will make it manageable
- exploring ways to monitor and evaluate nursing work experience programs.