

AORN Position Statement on Responsibility for Mentoring

POSITION STATEMENT

AORN believes that perioperative registered nurse (RN) mentors will

- create a culture that is mutually respectful, equitable, and inclusive of individual diversity;
- seek to build mutually supportive and strong interprofessional relationships in all areas of practice to facilitate growth and professional development;
- actively engage in opportunities to mentor novice perioperative nurses in clinical practice, inexperienced perioperative nurse managers, emerging leaders in the perioperative nursing milieu, students, and other persons interested in exploring perioperative nursing as a career; and
- model professional behavior and demonstrate a commitment to perioperative nursing by
 - participating in professional nursing organizations,
 - supporting practice-related legislative and regulatory initiatives that affect perioperative nursing practice,
 - maintaining an awareness of global health care issues that affect perioperative nursing,
 - fostering and engaging in lifelong learning to advance perioperative nursing knowledge, and
 - demonstrating leadership in clinical practice, professional organizations, and the perioperative environment.

RATIONALE

AORN recognizes the importance of mentoring in guiding and supporting individual perioperative nurses and in advancing the profession of perioperative nursing.¹ The purpose of mentoring includes fostering lifelong learning, employee satisfaction and engagement, career advancement, and succession planning.^{2,3} Mentoring is an important way to ensure continued excellence in perioperative nursing practice through inclusion and nurturing of new nurses.¹ Mentoring strengthens the nursing workforce and contributes to optimal patient care and outcomes by supporting nurses to practice at their best and creating positive leaders.

The 2021 AORN annual salary survey reported a steady rise in full-time nursing vacancies during the previous 8 years, with 2021 showing an 11% vacancy increase.⁴ In addition, age demographics for the current perioperative nursing workforce indicate that the future need for perioperative nurses will exceed the supply.⁵ The average age of specialty RNs is between 51 and 55 years old.⁶ Thus, there is a need to creatively and innovatively recruit and retain new nurses to the perioperative specialty. Examples of recruitment strategies would be collegiate partnerships, nurse practicum residencies, and pioneering transitions into practice.⁷

In addition to the demographic challenges, educational needs for perioperative nurses are greater than for generalist nurses, and formal academic nursing programs are often lacking in perioperative nursing content. The specialty of perioperative nursing is practiced within a setting characterized by rapidly

changing technology that requires new perioperative nurses to gain extensive knowledge and skills,⁷ and to adapt to continuously evolving economic and cultural forces. The perioperative setting can be intimidating for new nurses, considering the complicated, diverse, and advanced technology associated with carrying out most surgical procedures.^{1,8} In addition, the perioperative setting can be foreign to novice nurses and nurses from other specialties, since most receive only minimal exposure to the setting in the basic nursing curriculum.^{6,9} Experienced perioperative RNs have the opportunity to encourage interested individuals to enter the perioperative nursing specialty through formal and informal mentoring activities.^{5,8,10}

Perioperative RNs entering clinical, management, and leadership roles as well as nursing students seeking to explore the perioperative specialty may struggle without support. Novice perioperative nurses need role models, formal and informal support, and guidance to advance the practice of perioperative nursing. Perioperative RNs have a responsibility to promote active mentoring to strengthen interpersonal relationships and advocate for an environment that promotes recruitment of novice nurses, career development, and professional advancement for nurses within the specialty.

Finding ways to give back to the profession is important for perioperative nurses, and mentoring offers this opportunity. It is a way for each of us to leave a legacy, a positive contribution to the profession of nursing and the perioperative environment.¹¹

Glossary

Mentoring: A “one-on-one long-term relationship that encompasses guiding, supporting, coaching, teaching, role modeling, advocating, networking, and sharing. Promotes support during transition periods, teaching/learning, increased coping skills, and a safe environment for sharing and discovery.”¹²

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