

**Assessment Project Proposal  
Spring 2006**

1. Project Directors: Sara Horton-Deutsch, RN, APN, DNSc, Associate Professor & Angela McNelis, RN, APN, PhD, Assistant Professor
2. Department/Division and School: Department of Environments for Health, Indiana University School of Nursing
3. Campus Address: 1111 Middle Drive, Nursing Building, Room 403
4. Phone: 274-2129
5. Fax: 274-2411
6. E-Mail: [shortond@iupui.edu](mailto:shortond@iupui.edu) & [ammcneli@iupui.edu](mailto:ammcneli@iupui.edu)
7. Project Title: The Assessment of a Clinical Preceptor Course for Psychiatric Nursing Programs
8. Project Dates: May 1, 2006-April 30, 2007
9. Project Checklist

\_\_\_\_ Statement of support from the department chair or school dean by e-mail to [lhouser@iupui.edu](mailto:lhouser@iupui.edu) –as a separate file not included in proposal.

\_\_\_\_ Budget

The grant monies requested will be utilized to assess the effectiveness of the online preceptor program. We are requesting \$1,000 for each project director. In addition, \$500 is requested for a graduate student stipend to assist the project directors with piloting the program, administering evaluations, co-facilitating the focus groups, and manuscript preparation.

Total Project Request: \$2,500.00

## Abstract

The proposed project will assess the effectiveness of our existing online clinical preceptor orientation course that prepares psychiatric nurses to oversee the clinical experience of undergraduate and graduate nursing students. Clinical preceptors are expert nurses but need to be oriented to clinical teaching strategies, facilitating learning, and using reflective learning approaches that are core teaching pedagogies used in our psychiatric nursing courses. The preceptor course is designed to achieve specific learning outcomes that are consistent with the standards of practice for our discipline. However, the outcomes for this course have not been assessed.

#### a. Purpose of the Project

The proposed project will assess the clinical preceptor orientation course developed for use in the psychiatric nursing programs at Indiana University School of Nursing. This course was designed to address the Bureau of Health Professions' National Goals for improving access to quality health care through appropriate recruitment and education of health professionals. Because there is a shortage of faculty to educate student nurses in the psychiatric area, our programs utilize community-based expert nurse preceptors to assist with clinical teaching. To be successful teachers, community-based preceptors must be taught how to facilitate student learning. This course acquaints the preceptor with the preceptor role expectations, how to work with the students both in an online and practice learning environment, and how to assist students to effectively apply their learning in a clinical (clinical? patient care? real-life practice?) setting.

The goal of our clinical preceptor course is to orient clinical preceptors to their role expectations and responsibilities while in the clinical setting and to use reflective practice to enhance student learning. This course was developed based on a triad model (Billings et al., 2006) that involves the working together of the preceptor, learner, and educator. The preceptor course has not been tested and the purpose of the assessment project is to evaluate its impact on preceptor abilities and student learning.

#### b. Intended Outcomes of the Project

The intended outcomes of this project are to assess the effectiveness of the psychiatric clinical preceptor orientation course: (1) to increase preceptor ability to meet the role expectation and responsibilities of a preceptor; (2) to increase preceptor ability to assist students in using reflective practice; and (3) to increase student learning outcomes related

to the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The online preceptor orientation course will be required before a preceptor works with a student. In the online course, preceptors will be exposed to the course goals, objectives, and competencies for both the didactic and clinical program courses, as well as the clinical evaluation tool. The course introduces preceptors to onsite mentoring, strategies to assist student learning in a clinical setting, characteristics of adult learners, strategies for the development of reflective practice, and the evaluation process. Based on findings from our assessment, changes will be made to the orientation course to strengthen needed areas.

#### c. Assessment Methods

The course will be assessed for outcomes for the preceptor, learner, and educator.

Assessment questions include:

##### Questions for the Preceptor:

1. To what extent do you feel you learned from this course?
2. How helpful was this course in preparing you for your role as a preceptor?
3. How helpful was this course in preparing you to work with students within the reflective learning paradigm?
4. How did this course contribute to your ability to meet expectations of the preceptor role?
5. What examples can you give that demonstrate how you supported students' reflective learning in working with actual patients?
6. Tell me in what ways this course helped prepare you for your preceptor role?

Questions for the Student:

1. How helpful was your preceptor in preparing you for your role as a psychiatric nurse?
2. How helpful was your preceptor in preparing you to work within the reflective learning paradigm?
3. Can you give examples or tell a story about ways your preceptor was supportive in your clinical experience?
4. What examples can you give demonstrating how you used reflective learning in working with actual patients?

Answers to the above questions will be obtained by self-report surveys completed by the preceptors and students. These surveys will be developed as part of the project. We will collect data from preceptors, learners, and educators using focus groups, interviews, and direct observations to make formative and summative assessments to explore to what extent the clinical preceptor course achieved its goals and objectives.

Additionally, we will further assess to what extent the course helped students to practice within the reflective learning paradigm. Mezirow's (1990) three levels of reflection will be used to assess students' progression in reflectivity. Level one, non-reflection, is the absence of reflective thought. Level two, lower level reflection, involves the awareness of judgments, observations and descriptions, evaluation of planning, and assessment of decisions. Level three, critical reflection, is the process of reflection and includes assessment of the need for further learning and awareness that routines are not adequate and that change in perspective is needed. The ePortfolio tool will be used as a formative and summative evaluation method to assess to what level students are attaining

habits of reflection. We will require students to submit evidence to demonstrate mastery of the three levels of reflection. Evidence will include word processing documents, digitized materials, such as videos or graphics, and other data as appropriate. In addition to the students, both the educators and the preceptors will have access to the ePortfolio so that ongoing evaluation of learning can occur.

We will also conduct qualitative formative evaluations from the preceptors as they use each component of the program. This continuous evaluation approach will enable us to make changes that will improve the program. Summative evaluation conducted at the conclusion of the project will allow us to analyze the impact of the program on the desired outcomes, and will provide data for dissemination. Findings from this project will be important to the science of teaching and learning by contributing to the scant literature on preceptor training.

A triangulated methodology will be employed to evaluate courses and the program. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected from preceptors, learners, and educators through questionnaires, focus groups, and individual interviews. Incorporating multiple measures and sources will strengthen the comprehensiveness of the evaluation and lead to improved refinement of the preceptor program.

#### d. Data Analyses to be Employed

Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze and summarize the empirical data collected. We will employ content analytic procedures to examine qualitative data collected from the surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations.

#### e. Methods of Evaluation and Dissemination of the Results

Formative and summative findings will be used to revise and improve the program. In addition, findings will be shared with school of nursing faculty and other course developers to help improve existing clinical courses and to inform development of subsequent clinical courses. The faculty active in the design of this preceptor program will act as resources for other faculty, as well as to faculty from other schools.

The project directors plan to present papers and posters at local, state, and regional nursing meetings of health care professionals and distance education conferences. We will publish our lessons learned on the Web, welcome visitors, and be available as consultants to others interested in our preceptor training program. We also intend to publish our findings in professional nursing journals such as the *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* or the *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nursing Association*.

#### f. Details on Intended Use of Findings for Program Improvement

With the expectation that data will support the effectiveness of the online clinical preceptor orientation course for psychiatric nursing, we will work to expand the model to other clinical nursing areas. We will continue with the refinement and development of the course with our goal being that the course will become a national model.

#### References

Billings, D., Jeffries, P.R., Daniels, D., Reising, D., Stanley, T., Stone, C., & Stephenson, E. (Accepted for Jan 2006) Developing and using online courses to prepare nurses for employment in critical care. *Journal of Nurses in Staff Development*.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow et al., (Eds.) *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.