Legal and Ethical Issues

The student is accountable for his or her own actions. Students have their own malpractice insurance and Great Basin College has a contract with all agencies participating in the mentorship that covers student activity during the clinical experiences. The student is NEVER practicing on the mentor’s or instructor’s license. This is a common misconception.

Students are responsible for knowing their abilities and limitations and for asking questions as needed. The mentor is responsible for assigning the student properly, using the clinical map as a guide. Mentors may delegate to the nursing student any nursing care that the student has been prepared for through course work, campus lab experience, and prior clinical experience. By the time a student begins a mentored clinical he/she should be prepared to take on any nursing care responsibilities that may be delegated to a graduate nursing student. Questions regarding what a student may or may not do during a mentored clinical should be immediately directed to the instructor. Safety and critical thinking are vital for a successful clinical experience. If the preceptor has concerns about the safety of a student’s practice or ability to demonstrate critical thinking skills (thinking like an RN), please contact the instructor IMMEDIATELY!

Two situations may pose ethical dilemmas for mentors. One situation is when a student nurse, in the preceptor’s judgment, is not meeting the clinical outcome. The second situation is when there is a question regarding the safe practice and critical thinking. While these situations rarely occur, when they do they are a trying experience for a mentor. As the mentor you need to contact the instructor immediately to discuss the situation, the student’s behaviors, and your concerns. Remember the instructor is there to facilitate the experience for the mentor and the student.

What am I legally responsible for?

The student nurse is covered by professional liability insurance, so any practice decisions that are made by the student are covered. However, the mentor is bound by their own professional decisions in terms of nursing care delegated to the student nurse. Should your delegation fall outside the scope of prudent decision making, as in delegating to any other team member, you should share in the liability of the consequences of such a decision.

Any incident involving injury or an error, during the practicum, that involves the student needs to be immediately reported to the instructor or Program Director of Great Basin College Nursing Program by the mentor and the student. The appropriate form should be completed by the student as required by the institution and according to GBC policies (see attached GBC nursing policies and procedures for Safe Practice, Needlestick/Injury, Medication Errors, and Telephone/Verbal Orders, and Injury Reporting form).
The nursing student has met the standards of trustworthiness and competence in providing nursing care in every semester leading up to the mentorship. The instructors feel that our continuing physical presence would not enhance the mentored experience and may interfere with the valuable relationship that forms between the mentor and student nurse. The instructor is on call for you and for the student nurse, via phone or email visits. We hope this is satisfactory in addressing any legal questions without our being physically present.