

White Paper: Simulation in Transition to Practice Programs

Workgroup on Simulation Commission on Accreditation in Practice Transition Programs American Nurses Credentialing Center

Executive Summary

In its 2023 Annual Report, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP) and Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation® (APPFA) Program queried program directors about the use of simulation in transition-to-practice (TTP) programs. The findings from 255 accredited residency and fellowship programs demonstrated that most programs utilize simulation to advance the education of residents and fellows. Further, the ANCC Commission on Accreditation in Practice Transition Programs (COA-PTP) desired to understand the depth of simulation use, challenges, and barriers faced in implementing simulation to understand how the COA-PTP could support programs in implementing simulationbased experiences. Programs elicited the need for additional resources, support, and knowledge of best practices to further the adoption of simulation in TTP programs.

This white paper highlights the pivotal role of simulation in TTP programs, emphasizing its alignment with nationally recognized standards, guidelines, and certifications. It presents data from accredited programs that incorporate simulation, explores best practices for successful implementation, and offers practical tools and strategies. Additionally, the paper examines how simulation may align with the ANCC PTAP and APPFA standards.

COA-PTP supports expanding and effectively using simulation in TTP programs. With the right resources, support, and adherence to best practices, simulation can effectively prepare the next generation of healthcare professionals. We hope this white paper serves as a guide for excellence in simulation-based education, ultimately leading to improved patient care and professional development of residents and fellows.



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Introduction

Simulation in healthcare has emerged as an important educational strategy. It uses realistic and interactive environments to mimic clinical situations and patient interactions. This spectrum of simulation ranges from lowfidelity models, such as task trainers and verbal case scenarios, to high-fidelity or immersive simulations involving full-scale mannequins, virtual reality, or standardized patients who portray real-life scenarios (Diaz-Navarro et al., 2024). The versatility of simulation allows for a comprehensive approach to training healthcare providers, catering to diverse learning needs and scenarios.

Simulated experiences provide a safe space for learners to practice, make mistakes, and improve their clinical competencies without jeopardizing patient safety. It also promotes the development of critical thinking, problemsolving, and communication skills essential for effective patient care. Simulation can offer opportunities for learners to experience rare or high-risk clinical situations that they may not encounter frequently in real practice, thus preparing them for a broader range of healthcare scenarios (Diaz-Navarro et al., 2024). Incorporating debriefing sessions following simulation exercises is crucial, as it allows learners to reflect on their experiences, receive constructive feedback, and identify areas for improvement, thereby enhancing their readiness for independent practice (Dreifuerst, 2015; Decker et al., 2021).

TTP programs help healthcare professionals acclimate to their new roles in clinical practice. Simulation is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool within these programs for its ability to offer structured, experiential learning opportunities that replicate the complexities of real-world patient care. Programs can cover many learning needs using high- and lowfidelity simulations. Integrating simulation into TTP programs is crucial for preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals to meet the demands of clinical practice.



Current State of Simulation in ANCC PTAP and APPFA Programs

Simulation training can tremendously impact learners and significantly enhance healthcare professionals' experience and clinical competency (Elendu et al., 2024). However, despite the extensive benefits, implementing simulation into healthcare professional training can be challenging as it requires financial investment, specialized equipment, and adequate space and time. Currently, PTAP and APPFA do not include standards that require simulation in registered nurse (RN) residency, RN fellowship, or advanced practice provider (APP) fellowship programs. Although not required, many programs integrate simulation to meet specific standards. The 2023 ANCC PTAP and APPFA Annual Reports found that 96% of RN residency/fellowship programs (n = 233), and 77% of APP fellowship (n = 24) programs utilized simulation. Within these programs, most used high- and low-fidelity simulations, and more than half of both groups used standardized patients for simulation activities. Although 64% of RN residency and fellowship programs had a dedicated simulation lab, only 45% of APP fellowship programs had a dedicated space. Many concepts were taught during simulation for both groups, with the top three being management of decompensating patients, communication, and sepsis recognition and management. When asked about their perception of simulation's effectiveness as a learning method, 91% of program directors (PDs) rated simulation between effective and extremely effective. Data was also compiled from the 2022 and 2023 ANCC PTAP Accreditation with Distinction (AWD) self-study submissions, specifically how programs evaluated their learners. In 2022, eight of nine programs utilized simulation, with 21 out of 22 doing so in 2023. Furthermore, it was found that 64% of programs used simulation to evaluate competency, and 35% incorporated debriefing sessions after each simulation experience.

During the ANCC PTAP and APPFA Accredited Program Director (PD) meeting at the 2024 Transition to Practice Symposium, 100 PDs were in attendance. The PDs were requested to participate in a brief survey assessing their reasons for implementing simulation within their programs, barriers to that implementation, how they evaluated their learners, and if they were aware that simulation standards are available. The results revealed that the top three reasons for implementing simulation were to improve critical thinking (21%), communication (17%), and interprofessional collaboration (15%) (fig 1). The results additionally acknowledged various barriers to implementing simulation in the TTP programs. Aside from cost, time, and space, barriers included the ability to train faculty, access to high-fidelity simulation models, buy-in from higher administration, and how to engage in simulation with large numbers of learners effectively. When PDs were asked how they were evaluating their learners after simulation experiences, it was discovered that 36% held debriefing sessions, 28% utilized instructor evaluations, 24% used self-created tools, and only 12% used validated tools. Presently, there are established standards available for programs to utilize when implementing simulation into their programs. Of the PDs surveyed, 59% were aware of available standards and used them, 18% were aware but did not utilize them, and 23% were unaware that they were available. Lastly, the PDs were asked how the COA-PTP could best support them in implementing and utilizing simulation. Feasible responses included resource tool kits, simulation scenarios, webinar experiences, and cost analysis of return on investments.







How are you using simulation to address accreditation standards?

(fig. 2)

(fig. 3)



Are you aware that there are standards?





How are you currently evaluating learners?



Part I: Simulation Standards and Guidelines

Several organizations have established standards and guidelines that are benchmarks for best practices to guide the effective and ethical use of simulation-based education. These provide a comprehensive foundation for delivering highquality, evidence-based simulation experiences in healthcare transition programs.

International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice®

The INACSL Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice® are globally recognized for establishing best practices in simulation-based education. These standards address several key areas: simulation design, facilitation, pre-briefing, debriefing, operations, outcomes, professional integrity, interprofessional education, and evaluation. They provide evidence-based guidelines to ensure that simulations are educationally effective and consistently applied. INACSL regularly updates the standards to reflect new research and emerging trends in simulation.

Access standards and related articles here: inacsl.org/healthcare-simulation-standards-ql

Society for Simulation in Healthcare[™] (SSH) Healthcare Simulationist Code of Ethics

The SSH Healthcare Simulationist Code of Ethics guides professionals who design and implement simulation-based education. It emphasizes principles such as integrity, transparency, respect for learners, professionalism, and accountability. This code ensures that the simulation environment fosters trust and promotes learning without compromising ethical standards.

Download a complimentary copy here: ssih.org/healthcare-simulationist-code-ethics

Association of Standardized Patient Educators (ASPE) Standards of Best Practice

ASPE's Standards of Best Practice focuses on using standardized patients (SPs) in healthcare simulation. These guidelines address program management, and the recruitment, training, and utilization of SPs to simulate realistic patient encounters. The standards highlight best practices in scenario design, assessment, feedback, and ethical treatment of SP.

Access standards and related articles here: aspeducators.org/standards-of-best-practice



Association for Simulation Practice in Healthcare (ASPiH) Simulation Standards

ASPiH is a UK-based organization that has developed simulation standards that promote excellence in healthcare simulation guiding scenario design, faculty development, and debriefing practices. The ASPiH standards focus on fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration in simulation-based education. These standards help ensure that simulation practices are standardized, effective, and responsive to learner needs.

Access standards here: aspih.org.uk/standards-2/

Application of Simulation Standards and Guidelines in Transition to Practice Programs

Integrating established simulation standards and guidelines into TTP programs can help create a structured, high-quality learning environment that supports learners transitioning into new roles. The following approaches offer strategies for implementing simulation standards and guidelines.

- **Conduct a Gap Analysis:** Consider performing a gap analysis across the program to identify areas where existing simulation practices align with or fall short of established standards. For example, INACSL provides outlined criteria for each standard. A gap analysis may help program leaders pinpoint specific areas for improvement, prioritize changes, and allocate resources effectively.
- Establish Professional Development for Simulation Educators: To ensure consistent application of simulation standards, consider prioritizing the professional development of educators and facilitators involved in the in the simulation process. Investing in training could provide the latest guidelines or certifications.



Consider creating a mentorship system with experienced simulation professionals mentoring new facilitators. Providing ongoing professional development keeps facilitators updated on evolving best practices and strengthens the overall quality and consistency of the program.

- Standardize Scenario Design and Implementation Processes: Frameworks provided by INACSL and ASPiH can help create standardized protocols for scenario design, implementation, and evaluation for your program. Consider adopting templates and checklists to guide the scenario creation, ensuring consistency and alignment with program goals. This standardized approach makes it easier for new facilitators to adopt best practices quickly and maintain uniformity across simulations.
- Implement a Structured Debriefing
 Framework: Based on INACSL's standards, establish a clear framework for debriefing that ensures all learners receive constructive, focused feedback following each simulation.

Strengthen debriefing by training facilitators in evidence-based debriefing methods, ensuring that every session aligns with best practices and supports learner growth.

- Integrate Regular Quality Assessments or Ongoing Curriculum Evaluation: Adopt a systematic approach to quality improvement by scheduling regular audits of simulation practices against these standards. To ensure simulation remains relevant, encourage ongoing curriculum evaluation using ASPiH's emphasis on continuous improvement. Regularly gather feedback from learners and facilitators and track program outcomes to identify areas for enhancement.
- Establish Clear Ethical Guidelines and Accountability: Based on SSH's Code of Ethics, create a code of conduct specific to the TTP program that defines ethical expectations for both learners and facilitators. Reinforce this through initial orientations and integrate ethical discussions into debriefing sessions to help participants internalize these values.

Simulation certification and continuing education can provide the foundational knowledge for building and effective simulation curriculum that meets evidence-based benchmarks.



Part II: Simulation Certification & Continuing Education

Training and certification in simulation education are encouraged but not required. They are a valuable investment in gaining knowledge and experience with simulation best practices and applications. There is a wide range of training opportunities, from continuing education courses and lectures to formal certification courses. Simulation certification and continuing education can provide the foundational knowledge for building an effective simulation curriculum that meets evidence-based benchmarks.

Certification for Simulation Professionals

The SSH offers the only internationally recognized certification and accreditation programs for individuals who work in healthcare simulation and healthcare simulation centers. Certification and accreditation help to professionalize the field, ensuring that the educators and technicians have the skills and competencies to support high-quality, safe, and effective simulation training. The following is a summary of the certifications offered by SSH.

The Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator

CHSE professionals participate in simulation-based education and may include educators, instructors, or academic faculty members. This certification is designed to validate the educator's knowledge, skills, and abilities using simulation to teach, train, and assess learners in the healthcare setting. It focuses on the design, implementation, and evaluation of simulation activities. This includes an understanding of the methodology and tactics of appropriate debriefing. Advanced certification is for experienced healthcare simulation educators who have demonstrated advanced skills gained over time by educating within the simulation space. This certification recognizes those who have demonstrated expertise, innovation, leadership, and mentorship in simulation education. In addition to the CHSE professionals' exam completion, those with the advanced certification have a portfolio demonstrating their advanced experience and leadership skills.

CHSE (certified healthcare simulation educator®) CHSE®

CHSE-A (certified healthcare simulation educator-advanced®) CHSE-A®

The Certified Healthcare Operations Specialist

CHSOS professionals are responsible for the technical, operational, and logistical aspects of simulation and running the day-to-day operations of a simulation center. This certification focuses on healthcare simulation's technical and operational aspects, including the setup, maintenance, and troubleshooting of simulation equipment and environments. Like the CHSE, this requires a certification exam to demonstrate the appropriate knowledge. Advanced certification recognizes the advanced skills of a CHSOS in leadership, mentorship, and advocacy. This requires a demonstration of competency and a portfolio that lays out that specific experience.

CHSOS (certified healthcare simulations operations specialist®) CHSOS®

CHSOS-A (certified healthcare simulations operations specialist-advanced®) CHSOS-A®

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Continuing Education in Simulation

There are many opportunities for continuing education in simulation, from graduate-level degrees to week-long training courses, international conferences, and hour-long online webinars. Included below are links to high-yield resources for simulation professional development.

Professional Development

 Society for Simulation in Healthcare[™]: Professional Development

SSH provides an array of professional development opportunities on its site. The Online Learning section details courses, virtual learning labs, workshops, webinars, and lecture series. A Sim Training Directory is even provided to find opportunities for fellowships, degrees, and certificate programs in the healthcare simulation field. ssih.org

• Center for Medical Simulation (CMS): Simulation-based Training

CMS provides training for simulation instructors and workshops or training for clinical and leadership teams (non-clinicians). <u>harvardmedsim.org/training/</u>

 International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning: Center for Learning INACSL Center for Learning provides information on its Simulation Education Program, webinars, and recordings. learning.inacsl.org/

- National League for Nursing: Simulation Innovation Resource Center Courses
 NLN's SIRC Courses provide professional development offerings for those beginning their simulation journey with foundational courses to those needing more advanced offerings. nln.org/sirc-reimagined-courses
- The Gathering of Healthcare Simulation Technology Specialists: Online Training SimGHOSTS online training site details professional development opportunities for individuals interested in learning more or advancing their education in simulation technology. simghosts.org/page/Course_Listings
- HealthySimulation.com: eLearning
 This simulation resource website provides
 subscription and freemium-based webinars for
 individual learning or continuing education.
 Webinars range from experience level to
 disciplines and modalities.
 healthysimulation.com/
 (click on eLearning tab)
- Annual Conferences
 - SSH: International Meeting on Simulation in Healthcare (IMSH) & SimOps Conference. Click on Education Tab.
 - SimGHOSTS: Annual Conference, SimGHOSTS X Conference, & International Congress on Healthcare Simulation
 - INACSL: <u>Annual Conference & Women in</u> Leadership Symposium (click on Events tab)



Part III: Templates & Tools

Simulation is essential for practicing skills in a safe environment before engaging with real patients. It allows learners to make mistakes without risk, fostering growth and confidence. Both educators and learners value the experiences they gain in simulation environments. Various tools can enhance the rigor of simulation, with validated tools playing a key role in guiding learners through the process. These tools improve the quality of simulation outcomes and contribute to stronger clinical competencies.

Simulation Scenario Templates & Checklists

Simulation tools vary widely, from basic checklists to detailed case scenarios. Simple checklists work well for evaluating hands-on skills like placing a nasogastric tube, inserting a central line, or using a straightforward "met/not met" approach to measure success. Tools can also be used to assess more complex tasks, such as administering medications or making clinical decisions.

- National League for Nursing's Simulation
 Innovation Resource Center: <u>nln.org/education/</u>
 <u>education/sirc/sirc/sirc-resources/sirc-tools-</u>
 <u>and-tips</u>
- INACSL Repository of Instruments Used in Simulation Research: <u>inacsl.org/repository-of-instruments</u>
- Center for Medical Simulation's Free
 Open Access Materials (FOAM):
 harvardmedsim.org/resources/
- theSimTech®: thesimtech.org/
- SimGHOSTS (The Gathering of Healthcare

Simulation Technology Specialists) Simulation Resources: <u>simghosts.org/page/resource_links</u>

- HealthySimulation.com Resources (click on the Resources tab): healthysimulation.com/
- Society for Simulation in Healthcare
 Resource Menu: <u>ssih.org/ToolkitandResources</u>

Competency Evaluation Tools

Competency serves as a cornerstone in assessing learners' readiness for clinical practice. The Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) is widely used to evaluate competency. OSCEs provide a versatile platform for simulation-based assessments, enabling both skill development and the evaluation of clinical scenario competencies. However, the absence of a valid and reliable tool to assess learners during an OSCE has contributed to inconsistencies in evaluation outcomes.

• The Quint Leveled Clinical Competency Tool is a rubric-formatted instrument that assesses observed performance and rates the learner as a novice, progressing, advanced, or graduate nurse. It has been tested for accuracy and has high inter-rater reliability.

> Prion, S. K., Gilbert, G. E., Adamson, K. A., Kardong-Edgren, S., & Quint, S. (2017). Development and testing of the Quint Leveled Clinical Competency Tool. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 13(3), 106-115. dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecns.2016.10.008.

• The Sweeney-Clark Simulation Evaluation Rubric (SCSER) is a validated tool incorporating Benner's Novice to Expert framework to evaluate learner performance within a simulation experience.

Clark, M. (2006). Evaluating an obstetric trauma scenario. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing Education*, 2, e13-e16. doi.org/10.1016/j.ecns.2009.05.028



 The Creighton Competency Evaluation Instrument (CCEI) is a 22-item tool that appraises competency progression across four key categories: Assessment, Communication, Clinical Judgment, and Patient Safety.

> Creighton University Competency Evaluation site: creighton.edu/nursing/academics/competencyevaluation-instrument

> Parsons, M.E., Hawkins, K.S., Hercinger, M., Todd, M., Manz, J.A., Fang, X. (2012). Improvement in Scoring Consistency for the Creighton Simulation Evaluation Instrument[®], *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, *8*(6), e233-e238. <u>doi.org/10.1016/j</u>. <u>ecns.2012.02.008</u>

Debriefing Tools

Debriefing tools are essential for fostering reflection and deeper learning following simulation activities. These tools can range from structured question guides to detailed frameworks that encourage learners to analyze their actions and decisions. Effective debriefing tools help identify strengths and areas for improvement, promoting critical thinking and clinical reasoning. By creating a structured environment for feedback, these tools ensure that learners gain valuable insights to apply in future clinical scenarios. There are too numerous debriefing tools to list here. We recommend viewing the following resources for a listing and link to debriefing tools.

• INACSL Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice - The Debriefing Process

INACSL Standards Committee. (2021). Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice: The debriefing process. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, *58*, 27-32. <u>doi.org/10.1016/j.ecns.2021.08.011</u>

• Nursing Simulation Debriefing: Useful Tools

Kuszajewski, M.L. (2021). Nursing simulation debriefing: Useful tools. *Nursing Clinics of North America, 56(3)*, 441-448. doi.org/10.1016/j. cnur.2021.05.003.

Effective debriefing tools help identify strengths and areas for improvement, promoting critical thinking and clinical reasoning.



Part IV: Practical Applications for Simulation

Simulation can be applied to education, training, and exposure to many healthcare competencies. The opportunity for practice, trial and error, and learning in a simulated and lower-stakes environment can be invaluable to the trainee's skill development and confidence. Simulation can also be used for trainee evaluation.

Acute clinical emergencies and associated equipment

Simulation can allow trainees to practice communication and clinical skills in less common and high-stakes clinical scenarios that often require specialized equipment

- Difficult airway: use of airway adjuncts and exposure to airway kits, cricothyrotomy
- Tension pneumothorax: chest tube kits and drainage setups
- Massive transfusion: rapid blood product infusers and institutional blood product protocols
- Complex code: code cart and equipment
- Loss of IV access: intraosseous IV placement

Procedural skill building

Provides first-time exposure and the opportunity for repetition using task trainers

- Central line
- IV line
- Ultrasound-guided line placement
- Arterial line
- NG tube placement
- Airway management
- Lumbar puncture
- Injections
- Join aspirations
- Catheter placement
- Physical exam components



Communication

Simulated difficult conversations with standardized patients or colleagues allow trainees to practice and develop their communication skills in a lower-stakes environment

- Goals of care conversations
- Sharing bad news
- Serious illness conversations
- Family conferences
- Vitaltalk.org

Quality Improvement

- Identifying and addressing team communication challenges
- Identifying latent safety threats
- Ensuring readiness to care for specific patient populations and/or scenarios
- Improving individual confidence and competence
- Quality Improvement in Healthcare Simulation

Evaluation

Simulation-based evaluation of trainees can be a valuable tool – checklists, structured debriefing, and feedback are vital elements of these assessments

- Objective Structure Clinical Exams (OSCE)
- Procedural skills
- Clinical scenarios
- Communication skills



Part V: Alignment with Accreditation Standards

Simulation is a versatile tool that can align with accreditation standards across various domains in transition to practice programs. The following sections explore how simulation can address key accreditation areas, providing practical examples of its integration into program leadership, development and design, and practice-based learning from the 2024 ANCC PTAP and 2023 APPFA Application Manuals (ANCC, 2024; ANCC, 2023).

Program Leadership

Ensuring Consistent Operationalization Across Practice Sites: Simulation may help PDs ensure consistency by providing standardized scenarios, debriefing protocols, and evaluation tools across all practice settings.

Demonstrating Fiscal Accountability & Advocating for Resources: PDs could use simulation to allocate resources effectively by supporting equipment, faculty training, or program evaluation, while conducting costbenefit analyses may help justify expenditures and demonstrate financial responsibility.

Program Goals and Outcome Measures

Learner Competency: Simulation can provide a structured environment to evaluate skills, judgment, and knowledge, which may help to establish goals and outcomes aligned with learner competency.

Development and Design

Evaluation Tool Integration with Standards of

Practice: Aligning simulation scenario objectives and evaluation criteria with the American Nurses Association Scope and Standards of Practice (or international equivalents) and/or practice-setting standards ensures learners meet professional competency requirements.

Learner Reflection and Feedback, Competency Gaps, and Remediation:

Pre-briefing and debriefing sessions in simulations offer opportunities for learner reflection. Simulations that observe learner performance may allow for identifying gaps in competency or the opportunity to remediate with feedback.

Curriculum Development and Maintenance:

Simulation could be a component of the program curriculum maintained to align with clinical practice needs, standards, or evidence-based practices.

Integration of Interprofessional Team

Members: Simulation could allow for the involvement of team members from various disciplines in scenarios, enhancing teamwork, communication, and understanding of different roles within the healthcare system.

Practice-Based Learning

Practice-Based Learning and Support: Simulation may provide opportunities for mentorship or peer support, allowing experienced healthcare professionals to guide learners through scenarios and offer valuable feedback related to the concepts outlined in the domain.



Conclusion

Simulation offers a valuable, evidence-based strategy for bridging the gap between education and clinical practice in transition to practice programs. As highlighted throughout this white paper, simulation-based learning provides healthcare learners structured opportunities to develop critical competencies in a safe, supportive environment.

To maximize these benefits, transition-to-practice programs should prioritize simulation as a core component of their educational framework. Aligning simulation activities with established best practices and standards can improve consistency, enhance learner engagement, and strengthen competency evaluations. However, successful implementation requires ongoing professional development for educators and the allocation of appropriate resources to sustain these efforts.

The Commission on Accreditation for Practice Transition Programs encourages healthcare leaders to take actionable steps toward integrating simulation into their curricula. By adopting simulation-based learning, programs can better support healthcare professionals during the transition to practice, improving their readiness to deliver safe, effective care in increasingly complex clinical environments.

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