



# MARYLAND ACTION COALITION

*Creating a Healthier Maryland*

---

## FUTURE OF NURSING™ CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION

---

### Reflections from New Graduate Nurses: How Clinical Education in Nursing School Prepared Graduate Nurses for Practice

Kara Platt, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CNE

#### Abstract

**Background:** Clinical education in nursing school has been a valued hands-on teaching strategy for the preparation of nurses. Through these clinical experiences nursing students implement theories and skills they have learned and practiced in the classroom. In many instances, clinical experiences have not changed for many years and can be challenging to coordinate due to limited clinical time, a lack of facilities, and limited preceptors. Through all the challenges, nursing schools persist and meet regulatory and outcome metrics for clinical education every year. The goal of this research is to identify new graduates' perceptions of their clinical experiences and how those experiences prepared them for clinical practice upon graduation. By reflecting on new graduates' perception on how their clinical experiences as a student prepared them for practice, we can better plan and implement clinical teaching strategies that better reflect needs of new graduate nurses and ease the education to practice transition.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to gain perspectives from newly graduated nurses on their perception of how clinical education in nursing school prepared them for clinical practice.

**Methods:** New graduate nurses were asked to describe nursing school clinical experiences and how this prepared them to transition into clinical practice. They were further asked to identify areas for improvement in clinical experiences in nursing education.

**Case description:** Focus groups that included new or graduate nurses at an area hospital were formed to inquire about their nursing education clinical experiences. Open-ended questions regarding how their clinical experiences were achieved, what they felt would have enhanced their clinical experience, and what they identify as their biggest challenge as new nurses in the clinical area. Forty-eight nurse residents participated in Focus groups that included 4 sessions with 10-12 nurse residency participants in each session.

**Results:** There were several themes identified from the focus group transcripts. Overall, new nurse graduates entering the patient care field felt as if their clinical experiences could have better prepared them for practice. Major themes included: lack of opportunities for hands on skills and limited patient care; copious amounts of clinical preparation; on unit paperwork; follow up care plans that did not prepare them for the skills they needed when transitioning to practice; and, waiting for instructors with large groups of students resulting in decreased satisfaction and limited time to practice skills. Overall, new graduate nurses felt clinical experiences could have better reflected the complex nursing roles they have accepted post-graduation.