March 13, 2020

Dear Nursing Educators:

The Board is contacting you regarding the impact of COVID-19 on education programs and scheduled classroom and clinical experiences. There is a concern that education programs may need to close and/or health care settings could restrict or refuse student clinical experiences due to a localized outbreak, a quarantine directive by the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH), or other related issues.

The Board understands that current circumstances may impact a licensed practical nursing education program’s ability to comply with certain Board rules. Specifically, but not limited to:

Board Rule 410-9-.06(3)(a)
A full time program shall NOT be conducted longer than eighteen (18) months;

Board Rule 410-9-.06(5)
An approved program of instruction or its equivalent shall contain no less than six hundred eighty-five (685) clock hours of theoretical nursing and general education content, and no less than four hundred eighty-five (485) clock hours of planned clinical practice for each student.

Board Rule 410-9-.09(1)(i)
Student clinical experience shall include all required health care areas provided in Rule 410-9-.06:

1. Clinical experiences should be correlated with theoretical content;
2. The clinical experience instructor-student ratio shall not exceed a one (1) to ten (10) ratio;
3. At least three (3) licensed hospital or nursing home beds shall be available for every one (1) student practical nurse at any given time in a clinical affiliate;
4. At least 40% of the total board-required clinical experience hours must be obtained in the hospital setting.

In the event that a licensed practical nursing education program is unable to comply with a Board rule, the Board will consider petitions for rule waivers on a case by case basis as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-13-9.1(c). It will be important for programs to retain all related documentation.
from the program or from the clinical sites showing the COVID-19 impact on the program’s ability to meet clinical hours and other related student requirements. At this time, education programs may want to contact and work with clinical sites regarding the plans and procedures they may be considering related to COVID-19. Also, programs may need to consider assisting students with rescheduling, including deferment of clinical hours until any quarantine issues are resolved. The Board will certainly consider the circumstances and situations faced by each program based on COVID-19 when reviewing annual reports and during future site visits.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and GDPH continue to update information and alerts for COVID-19. The Board has posted a link to the GDPH coronavirus website (www.dph.georgia.gov) for readers to access updated resources and the latest developments. In addition, as the Board receives updates from GDPH and other entities, we will provide the information to stakeholders and nursing associations to share with their members and interested parties.

Please contact the Board at jcleghorn@sos.ga.gov if there are additional questions.

Sincerely,

Jim Cleghorn
Executive Director