March 16, 2020

Dear Nursing Program Administrators:

Several of you have contacted the Board asking for direction related to emergency planning and Board guidelines regarding acceptable methods of distance education and guidance on how to complete the clinical components of nursing courses. The Board recognizes the unique situation education programs are experiencing related to temporary program closures, institutional transitions to distance education methods, and changes in availability of sites for clinical learning experiences.

As you know, the Board regulates prelicensure nursing programs thru statutes and regulations; however, MSBON rules are broad and do not require a set number of theory and clinical hours. When considering how best to proceed, due consideration should be given to the possible impact that issuance of any incomplete grades may have on academic progression policies, financial aid eligibility, program completion, etc.

While changing face-to-face instruction to on-line instruction would be considered a substantive change in curriculum requiring Board approval, the Board would certainly consider the circumstances and situations faced by each program based on COVID-19 and the Board would document the impact of these extraordinary situations for the program and the student clinical experiences. It will be important that programs 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.

Regarding clinical hours and the use of simulation, Board rule limits simulation to 50% of the total clinical hours. If a program finds itself in a situation where it may need to exceed the 50% limit, the Board would again certainly consider the circumstances and situations faced by each program and the Board would document the impact of these extraordinary situations for the program and the student clinical experiences.

We are requesting programs to notify the Board of their intent to use online instruction and/or simulation as a replacement for classroom learning/clinical so that the Board will be officially aware of the change. If a program’s clinical partners are temporary restricting the program from sending students to their clinical site, the Board is requesting written notification from the program. Please include the Name of the clinical site, Specialty area of nursing (Med/Surg, OB, Peds, etc.), Expected recommence date, and Number of students effected.

Please submit questions or concerns to me via email. I will update programs as this situation continues to develop and on any updates for the Board.

Sincerely,

Kim Esquibel, PhD, MSN, RN
Executive Director