New Mexico Board of Nursing
Memorandum

To: Program Directors of Pre-licensure Nursing Education Programs

From: Melissa Charlie, PhD, RN, Director of Education and Practice

Date: March 26, 2020

Re: COVID-19, Clinical Hours, and Simulation

Dear Nursing Education Program Directors,

The actions taken by you and your leadership team to assure a safe clinical environment for your students and faculty and to assure continuity of operations are recognized by the board of nursing. Given the nature of the public health emergency, COVID-19, and the impact on nursing education programs, the board of nursing is offering some guidance.

The Nursing Practice Act and rules in part three do not allow for any emergency action or waiving of requirements for nursing education programs. However, the rules allow for flexibility in that certain items are not addressed. For instance, the rules do not indicate the number of clinical hours required in a pre-licensure nursing education program.

Regarding simulation, the rules refer to the definition of simulation, the requirements of a simulation experience, and the percentage of simulation allowed to substitute for clinical experience. Simulation is defined as (16.12.3.7 BB NMAC) “an experience that imitates the real environment, requiring individuals to demonstrate the procedural techniques, decision-making, and critical thinking needed to provide safe and competent patient care.”

The requirements for simulation as outlined in the rules are (16.12.3.12 B(4) NMAC): “Simulation learning experiences may concurrently include the use of low, medium, and high fidelity experiences. Nursing programs shall:

(a) establish clearly-defined simulation learning outcomes incorporating objective measures for success;
(b) incorporate written, planned design of individual training experiences and shall include consideration of the educational and experiential levels of the learners;
(c) make use of checklists for pre- and post-experience analysis and review;
(d) may substitute up to a maximum of fifty percent of a clinical education experiences using simulation programs and practices;
(e) have written simulation policies and procedures specific to the nursing education available to all faculty and pertinent staff. Simulation learning policies and procedures shall include evaluative feedback mechanisms for ongoing program improvement;
(f) incorporate facilitated student-centered debriefing sessions upon the conclusion of simulation-based activities.”

While virtual simulation might be an important learning tool, virtual simulation might not fit the definition outlined in the rules. However, if your program plans to use virtual simulation as a learning tool, those hours will count toward clinical hours if they follow the definition of simulation and the conditions required for any simulation.

The board of nursing will continue to work with the nursing education programs throughout this pandemic event. Maintaining open communication is important so please let me know if you have any additional questions.