

Entry Into Practice

The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) supports the baccalaureate degree in nursing as the basic educational level for all registered nurses entering the profession of nursing. This position is based on the recognition that health care is becoming increasingly complex and technical, and that uniform educational preparation at the collegiate level will best meet the needs of future consumers as well as nurses.

NAPNAP supports the American Nurse's Association's first position on Education for Nursing (ANA, 1965; ANA, 2000). This document advocates that education for those who work in nursing should take place in institutions of higher learning. Today, with the complexity of health care, it remains vital that the nursing professional be grounded in science with an emphasis on critical thinking, which is a major component of the baccalaureate education. A recent study has shown that, in hospitals with higher proportions of nurses educated at the baccalaureate level or higher, surgical patients experienced lower mortality and improved patient outcomes (Aiken et al, 2003). Therefore, NAPNAP supports the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) as the minimum educational requirement for professional level nursing practice (AACN, 2000).

While supporting baccalaureate preparation for entry into professional nursing, NAPNAP recognizes that two issues need to be considered, including protection of the professional standing of registered nurses currently practicing without bachelor's degrees and expansion of career ladder mobility for non-degreeed and licensed practical nurses who wish to continue their education.

NAPNAP:

- Recognizes the important role associate degree nursing (ADN)-prepared nurses have in the delivery of health care.
- Encourages registered nurses prepared at pre-baccalaureate levels to advance their education.

- Endorses accessibility to high-quality educational and career mobility programs that utilize flexible approaches to continued education.
- Supports articulation models from associate degree programs to baccalaureate and higher degree programs (AACN, 2002).
- Emphasizes nursing education as a means to gain recognition by other health care professionals, on health policy boards, and governing bodies.
- Emphasizes baccalaureate nursing preparation as a means to educate nurses who are able to provide quality comprehensive patient care in a changing health care environment.
- Advocates for legislation that supports nursing education both at the baccalaureate and graduate levels with a goal of shaping a nursing workforce best prepared to meet the needs of the population.

In conclusion, the increasingly complex health care systems require nurses who have comprehensive educational preparation. As health care becomes more complex, the health system requires nurses who can assume diverse responsibilities, think critically and practice in a variety of settings. A baccalaureate nursing education prepares nurses to meet the needs of the changing health care system.

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