

Feasibility Study
Increasing Preceptorship Opportunities for Nurse Practitioner Students
Upper Midlands Rural Health Network
Rev. 1/6/2025

Executive Summary

One of the most pressing issues in preparing the future healthcare workforce is the lack of clinical preceptorships, a requirement for graduation. The lack of preceptorships is especially challenging for Nurse Practitioner (NP) students. Unlike the NP programs, the medical schools have a strong support system for their clinical rotations and some medical schools even offer a stipend for the preceptor. To compete, some NP students have paid preceptors out-of-pocket while others have been forced to delay degree completion.

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), which operate independently from large healthcare systems, remain an untapped resource for precepting opportunities. FQHCs offer a rich learning environment for students since many of them offer family medicine, obstetrics, pediatrics, and behavioral health all at the same facility.

While necessary for the student, FQHCs stand to benefit from offering preceptorships as well. The preceptorship process serves as a long job interview, allowing the FQHC to recruit new providers who they already know would be a good fit in the organization. The NP students also bring fresh perspectives and the latest knowledge, keeping the practice up-to-date.

Major Findings

FQHCs are at varying stages of readiness for offering preceptorships. Many FQHCs have been in a reactive mode, responding to student inquiries as they arise. There are some important things that should be in place prior to starting a preceptorship program. There are also several steps to take to make the process as smooth as possible for everyone involved. There are some costs associated with offering preceptorships, and this study can be used to pursue funding from community foundations and/or take advantage of tax credits and similar programs to offset these costs.

Recommendations

- Establish affiliation agreements with the schools in advance.
- Develop a relationship with your local Area Health Education Center (AHEC), who can assist with matching and logistics.
- Discuss the benefits with all staff, not just providers.
- Update job descriptions to encourage or require participation in preceptorships.
- Add precepting to the annual performance evaluation to incentivize this activity.
- Consider reducing patient caseloads to allow more time for instruction.

Background Information

Nurse Practitioner (NP) is one of the fastest growing occupations, projected to grow 45% between 2022-2032, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics¹. One requirement of the NP program is to complete a specific number of clinical hours with a preceptor/provider. An NP's preceptor can be a Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistant, or Physician. Competition for finding a preceptor is high, especially for NP students who are not affiliated with a large, brick-and-mortar, academic institution

Currently, there are six NP programs in South Carolina (brick/mortar):

- Anderson University <https://andersonuniversity.edu/college-of-health-professions/>
- Charleston Southern University <https://www.charlestonsouthern.edu/academics/college-of-nursing/>
- Clemson University <https://www.clemson.edu/cbshs/>
- Francis Marion University <https://www.fmarion.edu/healthsciences/>
- Medical University of South Carolina <https://nursing.musc.edu/>
- University of South Carolina https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/nursing_at_a_glance/index.php

Online programs accepting South Carolina students include:

- Chamberlain University <https://www.chamberlain.edu/academics/nursing-school/graduate-certificate-programs>
- Georgetown University <https://grad.georgetown.edu/programs/>
- Purdue Global <https://www.purdueglobal.edu/degree-programs/nursing/family-nurse-practitioner-certificate/>
- Post University <https://degrees.post.edu/degrees/nursing>
- Walden University <https://info.waldenu.edu/walden-programs/nursing/>

Each school will require some form of written agreement for offering preceptorships. This can be a lengthy process, so it is recommended to get this document in place before a student approaches your clinic. Once finalized, these agreements are often valid for several years.

To learn how one FQHC recently enhanced its preceptorship program, watch the session titled "Increasing Preceptorship Opportunities for Nurse Practitioner Students at FQHCs," available at the SC AHEC Learning Portal <https://www.scahec.net/learn/>.

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/fastest-growing.htm>

Description

The NP student, the Preceptor/Provider, and the FQHC Administration all play key roles in ensuring a smooth and positive experience. One partner that can play a vital role is the local Area Health Education Center (AHEC). In South Carolina, there are four regional AHEC offices. AHEC works with multiple academic institutions and community-based practices to coordinate clinical experiences for health professions students across the continuum. For 50+ years, the center's goal is to support and provide quality clinical experiences, especially for students in rural/underserved areas. The centers coordinate clinical placements along with other logistics, including student housing. Please find a list of the South Carolina regional AHEC offices on the last page of this document.

Advantages

Preceptorships benefit everyone involved. There should be a paradigm shift from simply fulfilling a requirement to the broader positive implications.

1. The FQHC can play a key role as a teaching facility.
2. Readily available preceptorships ensure students receive the necessary training, graduate on time, and enter the workforce prepared.
3. Providers play a key role in educating the next generation. Additionally, the providers can learn the newest and most innovative research from the students.
4. Preceptorships can help Administration identify strong candidates for future employment.
5. Precepting students is an eligible activity for CE Units through the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP).

To fully incorporate the importance of precepting into the organizational culture, consider updating job descriptions to encourage or require participation in preceptorships as well as adding precepting activities to the annual performance evaluation to incentivize this activity.

Disadvantages

The main disadvantage of offering preceptorships is that time to adequately instruct the students reduces the number of relative value units (RVUs) for the provider, thus impacting the bottom line. Your Chief Financial Officer (CFO) will be able to quantify the amount of lost revenue this represents. This figure, along with other costs outlined in the Financial Feasibility section of this report, can be used to make the case for external funding support, such as from local community foundations.

Financial Feasibility

Expenses to Consider

In addition to the lost revenue discussed above, there are some hard costs to be expected as well. The FQHC can quantify these costs and use them in a grant proposal to help offset some or all of the costs.

Staffing

The organization will want to designate one administrative staff person as the lead. This person will be the primary contact for the students and the AHEC office. They will handle the scheduling and other logistics so the provider does not have to spend the time on it. They will also serve to onboard the NP student, providing a short orientation and ensuring all paperwork is complete. To assign a cost to this activity, it will be helpful to track how much time is spent per student and then calculate the cost based on the staff member's salary.

Space Requirements

The NP student will need a work station, including a desk and chair. The CFO will most likely have a space cost broken out by the number of square feet.

Equipment Needs and Costs

The immediate costs associated with preceptorships include some of the basics for adding an additional employee, such as setting the students up on the IT system, issuing ID badges, and providing a laptop or computer.

Computer Software Requirements

The NP student will need to be set up as a user in your EMR system. Each software package is different, so check to see what the cost of an additional license/user might be costing your organization so you can include it in funding proposals.

Potential Funding Sources

Foundations

- The Abney Foundation <https://www.abneyfoundation.org/>
- The Arras Foundation – serving Lancaster County and Great Falls and Fort Lawn in Chester County <https://arrasfoundation.org/>
- The Chester Healthcare Foundation <https://chesterhealthcarefoundation.org/>
- Central Carolina Community Foundation – serving Calhoun, Clarendon, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lee, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, Richland, Saluda, and Sumter counties <https://www.yourfoundation.org/>
- The Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina – serving Charleston, Beaufort, Berkeley, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, Hampton, Horry and Jasper counties <https://coastalcommunityfoundation.org/>
- Community Foundation of Greater Greenville, Inc. <https://www.cfgreenville.org/>

- Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, Inc. – serving Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper Counties <https://cf-lowcountry.org/>
- Foothills Community Foundation – serving Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties <https://foothillscommunityfoundation.org/>
- Foundation For The Carolinas – serving Cherokee, Lancaster, and York Counties <https://www.fftc.org/>
- The Spartanburg County Foundation <https://spcf.org/>
- Waccamaw Community Foundation Georgetown and Horry Counties <https://waccamawcf.org/>

Tax credits for Providers serving as Preceptors

- Explore potential tax credits for time precepting (may include restrictions on in-state students)²
 - How to claim: <https://dor.sc.gov/about/forms>
 - TC-62 (Make sure to use the form for the correct year)
 - Who is eligible: Eligible physicians, advanced practice registered nurses, or physician assistants who serve as a preceptor for at least two qualifying clinical rotations required by a medical school, physician assistant program, or advanced practice nursing program
 - Amounts per rotation are based on:
 - Type of preceptor (physician, advanced practice registered nurse or physician assistant)
 - Percentage of practice that is Medicaid-insured, Medicare-insured, or self-pay patients
 - Tax year
 - Credit is per rotation, for up to four rotations
 - Taxpayers serving more than four rotations can earn a deduction for up to six additional rotations
 - Can't exceed 50% of tax liability after all other credits are applied
 - Tax type: Income Tax
 - Credit carryforward: 10 years

Other Sources

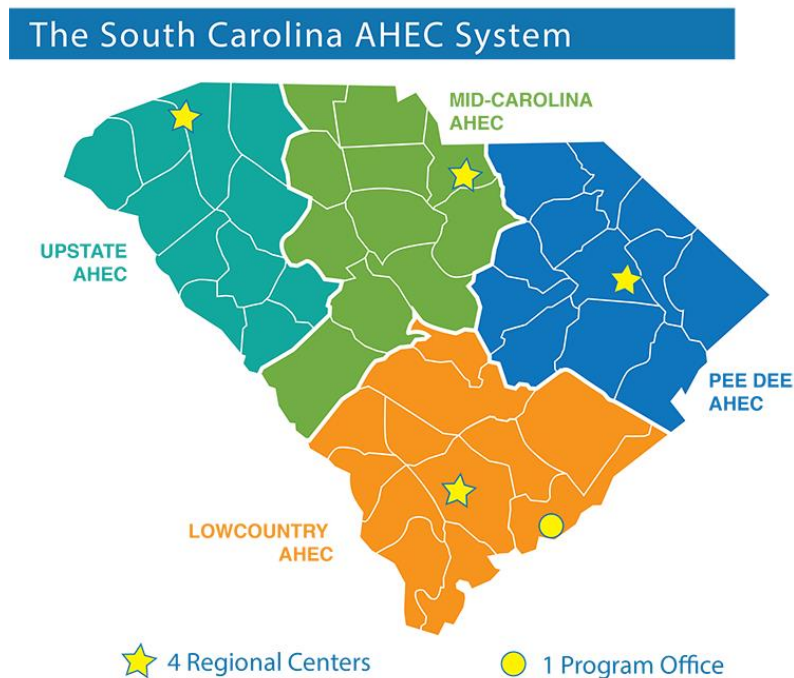
Ensure the new providers know that working in underserved populations qualifies for tuition repayment programs, such as HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration). <https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarships/overview>





² <https://dor.sc.gov/about/tax-credits>

Next Steps

To begin or enhance your preceptorship program, consider the following steps:

- Discuss internally with administrators and Board of Directors.
- Brief all staff. They should interact with the student as they would a provider.
- Identify a lead staff member to handle logistics.
- Reach out to your regional AHEC office.
- Have key staff, not just providers, participate in SC AHEC’s free online virtual course “Preceptor Orientation & Education” found here <https://www.scahec.net/learn/programs/cpd/2445>



 <p>Lowcountry AHEC <i>Excellence in Healthcare Through Education</i></p>	 <p>Mid-Carolina AHEC Area Health Education Center</p>	 <p>Pee Dee AHEC <i>Policy and Support for Pediatric Providers South Carolina South</i></p>	 <p>Upstate AHEC <i>Excellence in Health Care Through Education</i></p>
<p>Lowcountry AHEC</p>	<p>Mid-Carolina AHEC</p>	<p>Pee Dee AHEC</p>	<p>Upstate AHEC</p>
<p>Walterboro</p>	<p>Lancaster</p>	<p>Florence</p>	<p>Greenville</p>
<p>(843) 782-5052</p>	<p>(803) 286-4121</p>	<p>(843) 777-5343</p>	<p>(864) 349-1160</p>