



**NURSING
ASSISTANT
CORE
COMPETENCIES**

By: Julia K. Fulton, R.N.

Dedicated to my grandson, **Zett Rainey Fulton**, son of

Robert W. Fulton, Jr. and Myra McGrath Fulton;

my children's grandparents (all deceased)

Edward D. and Genevia Henderson Muse
and

Robert and Catherine McCord Fulton;

and

to my former husband, **Bob**; I thought

he loved me more than anyone else ever could.

He made me believe I could "Soar With The Eagles."

FORWARD

Competency is best defined as the ability to take what is learned in the classroom and put it into action in the performance of job duties or skills in the patient care area. It is the integration of knowledge and skill. I like to think of competency as the conversion of knowledge to skill or a passive process becoming an active one. Competency was first mentioned in the Joint Commission on Accreditation for Hospitals Organization (JCAHO) one page standard in 1917. Competency has always been addressed in the standards but the “buzz” word reappeared in the standards again in 1991 and caused a considerable amount of anxiety for health care workers.

It took me six years to develop a competency program for the hospital that employs me as their Education Director. Along the way, I purchased other books on the subject but found them to mostly be instructions on how to develop a program. I wanted a program already developed that would save the most precious commodity, time. I built a generic program for registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and nursing assistants based on the theory that every level of nursing practice should be able to perform a core of duties or skills that have national application. A bed bath in Kentucky would be performed the same way as a bed bath in Wisconsin. Core competencies should be validated prior to an employee specializing. Everything else would be above and beyond the core. All nursing assistants should be able to measure adult height and weight but the Newborn Nursery nursing assistant should be able to measure length, weight and head and chest circumference on an infant.

Competency is an evaluation process that begins with initial employment and continues throughout the employee’s affiliation with the institution. The program requires blank forms for self-assessment, recording of written scores, administration, tracking and documentation of competency. Aggregate data can be collected on an ongoing basis to determine educational needs of staff and provide a record of competency levels for reporting to the Board of Directors, etc. The core competencies have been formulated as step-by-step instructions on how to perform the skills and can be used as a reference on the nursing units for education and as a tool used to improve performance for below standard ratings. They can also replace many policies and procedures. There should be a system to objectively measure competency and the process should be simple and consistent throughout the nursing department and the healthcare institution.

Nursing Assistant Core Competencies is the third book I have written on the subject of competency. Registered Nurse Core Competencies has been available for purchase since September 1996. Licensed Practical Nurse Core Competencies was a revision and a modification as directed by state nursing practice guidelines. The system has not been changed but the eighteen (18) core competencies for nursing assistants contains thirteen (13) new competencies and 5 competencies that have been previously addressed. Their jobs mainly consist of providing “hands on” patient care.

These books are not instructions on how to develop a competency program. It has already been developed and contains a blank form, instructions for completion and a completed example for each step of the process. I have future plans to write books that contain competencies for each nursing unit in the hospital followed by competencies for every department in the hospital.

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And to all Nursing Assistants I have worked with during my career as a RN that taught me many of the basic skills I needed to learn to be a better caregiver.

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SECTION I

Policies, Procedures, and Forms