Nurse Onboarding Checklist

AACN's Guide to a Structured Orientation Program

Section 1: Pre-Onboarding Preparation

- [ ] Complete HR requirements and compliance paperwork
- [ ] Review organizational mission, vision, and values
- [ ] Assign preceptor program match and orientation schedule
- [ ] Provide access to hospital systems, EMR, orientation modules, and email
- [ ] Confirm orientation duration and expectations

Section 2: Baseline Assessments

- [ ] Complete knowledge assessment (clinical knowledge, policies, safety)
- [ ] Validate core clinical skills in simulation or skills lab
- [ ] Assess readiness for assigned clinical rotations
- [ ] Document results in preceptor/manager record

Section 3: Orientation Modules

- [ ] Complete assigned nurse orientation modules (e.g., AACN ECCO)
- [ ] Review policies, procedures, and safety protocols
- [ ] Participate in unit-specific training requirements
- [ ] Attend simulation sessions (codes, emergencies, high-risk care)
- [ ] Begin residency program integration (if applicable)

Section 4: Preceptor Support

- [ ] Meet assigned preceptor
- [ ] Collaborate with preceptor on preferred learning style, feedback and goals for orientation
- [ ] Receive regular structured feedback from preceptor
- [ ] Log weekly progress in orientation journal
- [ ] Schedule monthly check-in with manager/educator

Section 5: Competency Framework

- ☐ Validate clinical practice knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs)(IVs, ventilators, wound care)
- ☐ Validate clinical competence (e.g., AACN Competence Framework: Synergy Nurse performance outcomes)
- ☐ Complete teamwork and communication evaluations
- ☐ Demonstrate safe handoff reports and delegation skills
- ☐ Meet quality metrics (medication safety, infection prevention)
- ☐ Review competency milestones with preceptor and manager at regular intervals

Section 6: Ongoing Evaluation

- ☐ Complete midpoint performance review
- ☐ Address feedback from preceptor and peers
- ☐ Reflect on challenges (including night shifts) well-being, and coping strategies
- ☐ Participate in case discussions or case studies
- ☐ Prepare for final orientation evaluation

Section 7: Final Evaluation & Transition

- ☐ Complete final competence and KSA validation
- ☐ Review unit-based job satisfaction and work environment survey
- ☐ Sign off on orientation program completion
- ☐ Transition or continue into nurse residency program (if applicable)
- ☐ Establish goals for first year of practice

Next Steps

Adapt this checklist for your unit, share with preceptors, and align with organizational quality metrics.