Policies and procedures: An overview

Policies and procedures are critical components to strong programs. Every program needs to have **a complete set**, which should be reviewed regularly and approved per organizational protocol. Policies and procedures are needed to support practice, particularly if the practice is not explicitly detailed in the state's **Nurse Practice Act**. This is true regardless of whether the program is hospital- or community-based. Anoscopy and speculum exams, use of toluidine blue dye and alternate light sources. All exam components — anoscopy and speculum exams — require a policy to support clinicians incorporating them into the patient care process.

Policies and procedures must be reviewed regularly. At a minimum, they should be reviewed using the same time frame the parent organization uses for agency-wide policies and procedures. However, for new programs, or programs going through a great deal of rebuilding, it might be a good idea to review policies more frequently to start. The time frame used should also account for the rapidly evolving science related to this clinical specialty, as policies should strive to be evidence-based. We recommend an annual review.

Once they have been reviewed and approved by management, every member of the team should receive copies of all new or updated policies. New team members should receive a complete set of policies and procedures as part of their orientation. While reading policy manuals may feel tedious, SANEs need to remember that it is the program's policies and procedures that support the clinician, both in the exam room and in court.

Tool: *Policy and Procedure checklist*

Online Resources

Nursing Resources: Standards, Guidelines, Protocol, Policy
http://researchguides.ebling.library.wisc.edu/content.php?pid=325126&sid=3267902

Evidence-based policy and procedures: an algorithm for success.
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18157005

Exploring the role of organizational policies and procedures in promoting research utilization in registered nurses
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1904235/pdf/1748-5908-2-17.pdf

About the author

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