The purpose of this evidenced based practice project is to increase the number of specialty certified nurses at the community facility by 10% in 2015, 2016 and again in 2017.

Although specialty certification is linked to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction, Nursing Professional Development (NPD) practitioners struggle to promote nursing specialty certification in organizations. Nurses may not recognize the value and benefits of specialty certification. Additionally, nurses may not be aware of the certification process, requirements and available programs. Nurses list common barriers as reasons for not achieving specialty certification, some of which include cost, test anxiety, and lack of access to preparation courses and exam sites (Perlstein et al., 2014).

Certification validates an individual's knowledge and skills in a defined role and clinical area of practice (ANCC, 2016). Benefits to Organization include: reduced turnover, reduced vacancy rates, increased engagement, higher standards of practice, increased accountability, promotes positive work environment. Benefits to Patients: Improved patient outcomes, reduced falls, reduced lengths of stay, improved patient satisfaction.

Boyle, D. et al. (2015) completed a secondary analysis of longitudinal data from NDNQI, showing a small significant relationship, suggesting increase in RN specialty certification is associated with improved fall rates.


The ANCC has requested a scoping review to examine how specialty certification is operationalized in nursing (Kits, S. & Rachel, G. 2017). Additionally, studies suggest a link between specialty certification and improved outcomes, more research is needed in support of certification. Researchers may have difficulty drawing strong conclusions between patient outcomes and certification due to variability in certification requirements (Kits, S. & Rachel, G. 2017).

The increase in nurses certified in their specialty indicates success of this model. Opportunities include enhancing staff group access and career development sessions.

- Certificated RNs demonstrate lifelong learning, changes in practice and are more engaged.
- Certificated RNs are linked to improved patient outcomes; quality and patient satisfaction.
- Benefits to Nurses include: recognition, respected as expert in specialty area; enhances professional, builds confidence, demonstrates lifelong learning, improves marketability.

Level of Evidence 4

Level of Evidence 4

Level of Evidence 4

Level of Evidence 4

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