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COMPETENCY BASED ORIENTATION

By Susie Thompson, RN, MSN

Competency-based orientation (CBO) is the methodology used for new employee RNs entering into the medical-surgical division of nursing at UC San Diego Health System. Competency-Based Learning is a research-based approach that targets the critical behaviors necessary for optimal individual and organizational performance. Further explained, a competency is a set of relevant behaviors that influence job performance. Competency can be measured against standards; and can be improved through training and development. The CBO tool incorporates both hospital-wide and unit-specific competencies. The unit specific CBOs were recently introduced in the medical-surgical division of nursing in hopes to standardize competencies shared across units. In addition it allows for specialized competencies unique to specific units, patient populations, and clinical equipment. The competency-based approach is adult-learner focused, which promotes individualized and

relevant learning. This approach offers a multi-modal learning approach contingent on learner, content, and situational circumstances. The CBO guides the learner to supplemental educational resources to solidify learning. The CBO packets are distributed in new employee orientation with an explanation of orientee and preceptor role expectations and instructions for use.

As Registered Nurses (RNs), one fundamental oath is to accept accountability and responsibility for one's own practice, judgment, actions, professional growth, and maintenance of competence. In line with this concept, as RNs are oriented to a new work environment it is critical to promote culpability of the new employee's individual educational needs, learning preferences, and ultimately overall obtainment of knowledge. By promoting self-accountability, the new employee takes ownership of the degree of professional growth, thereby optimizing advancement of professional competence.



Susie Thompson, RN, MSN, began her career at UCSD in January of 2009 as a Clinical Nurse Educator and currently is the nurse manager of 2W, a medical-surgical/telemetry unit at La Jolla. Susie graduated from CSU, Dominguez Hills with the MSN degree specializing in Nursing Education.



RNs that have utilized the CBO to orient to UCSD and acute care units have collectively voiced that the CBO is very comprehensive. Heather Naylor, a 2 West RN, shared, "The CBO was good as it helped identify all the things that I needed to know as a new grad." Being a new graduate nurse or an experienced nurse new to a health system can be overwhelming and there is much uncertainty with what a nurse needs to know to provide safe and competent care. Elizabeth Brennan has had the opportunity to develop professionally at UCSD as she began her career in the New Graduate Rotation Program at the La Jolla campus two years ago and has expanded her role on the medical surgical unit as a preceptor. She has shared that the CBO is an invaluable tool. "As a preceptor, the CBO provides me with a structured approach to teaching the newly hired RNs. Often, when it is busy on the floor things can be missed, especially things that we do not do or see every day, such as restraints. The CBO keeps all the need to know stuff on the learning list. I also think that the goal setting portion of the CBO is incredibly helpful as it facilitates conversation between the preceptor and orientee to collaboratively set goals each shift."