

Report of the Development and Validation of a Competency Framework for Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

Prepared for
The Pediatric Nursing Certification Board



Prepared by



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Acknowledgements

On behalf of ACT, we are pleased to have conducted this important study for the Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB). This report describes the development and validation of a competency framework for pediatric nurse practitioners and presents recommendations regarding the implementation of the resulting PNP competency framework to inform and support pediatric nurse practitioners as they develop in their careers, maintain their certification, and enhance their daily practice. It represents the culmination of 12 months of planning, execution, data analyses, and writing.

A project of this magnitude depends on the hard work and commitment of many professionals, and we are pleased to acknowledge their contributions to the final product. We are indebted to the 14-member Competency Development Task Force (CDTF) for the insights and energy it provided. The following Task Force subject-matter experts worked tirelessly with us through the study: Akosua Childs, DNP, CPNP-PC, PMHS; Jennifer Keller, DNP, CPNP-PC, PMHS; Jenny Montgomery, MS, APRN, CPNP-AC; Jillian Lynaugh, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC; Lyndsey Ackerman, MSN, CPNP-AC; Mark Riccioni, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC/CPNP-AC; Meghan Potthoff, PhD, APRN-NP, CPNP-AC; Shawna Mudd, DNP, CRNP, CPNP-AC; Sheila Brown, DNP, CPNP-PC; and Van Nguyen, APRN, CPNP-PC.

The following members of the PNCB Board of Directors participated as full members of the Task Force and served as leadership liaisons: Amanda Vickers, MS, RN, CPNP-PC, PMHS; Michael Maymi, DNP, APRN, CPNP-AC, CCRN, CNE; Sandra Jones, DNP, APN, CPNP-PC; and Scott Meskimen, MSN, CPNP-PC, PMHS.

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We conclude by stating that the views expressed in this report are those of ACT and do not necessarily reflect the views of PNCB or of those experts who provided advice on the conduct of this study.

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Executive Summary

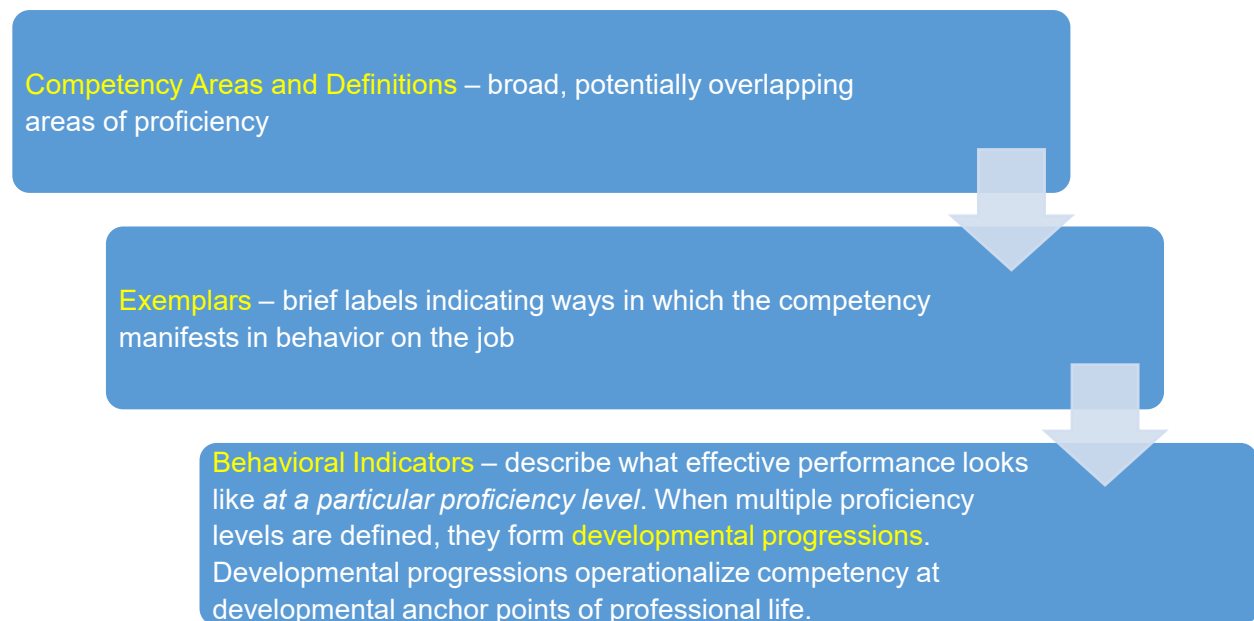
In 2022, PNCB initiated a project to develop a competency framework for pediatric nurse practitioners. The PNP competency framework development project represented a key element of PNCB’s ongoing Continuing Competence Initiative. The purpose of this initiative was to develop well-informed methods of ensuring continuing competence in the context of PNCB’s certification maintenance programs.

The PNP competency framework describes the evolution of practice for both acute care and primary care pediatric nurse practitioners and was designed to support PNCB’s Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner-Acute Care (CPNP-AC) and Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner-Primary Care (CPNP-PC) certification programs. The goal of the project was to create a competency framework that describes the ways that pediatric nurse practitioners may develop professionally over time and with experience across the range of employment settings in which CPNP-ACs and CPNP-PCs work.

Development of the PNP competency framework took place between June 2022 and May 2023. The methodology was designed to align with best practices in competency development as articulated by Campion et al. (2011).

PNCB appointed a 14-member Task Force to create the PNP competency framework. The composition of the Task Force was considered thoughtfully to ensure representation among the members with different credentials and a range of demographic and practice-related perspectives. Of the 14 participants, four were members of the PNCB Board of Directors. The Task Force met several times, both in person and virtually, to develop the PNP competency framework. Six focus groups with additional pediatric nurse practitioners were conducted to gather feedback regarding the draft PNP competency framework during its development.

The PNP competency framework consisted of the following elements:



The PNP competency framework is structured around seven broad role-based competency areas:



The PNP competency framework was validated by surveying 23,540 certified pediatric nurse practitioners, representing the population of CPNP-ACs, CPNP-PCs, and those holding both credentials for whom PNCB had email addresses and who had agreed to participate in such studies. Rating scales assessed perceptions of the point in a pediatric nurse practitioner’s development when each behavioral indicator would be typically demonstrated in a consistent fashion. The survey return rate was 7.4%. Validation ratings generally affirmed the progressions – that is, the order in which behaviors were consistently demonstrated. There were some differences in the perceptions of *when* (in terms of specific years of experience) in a pediatric nurse practitioner’s career some of the delineated behaviors might emerge. In the few instances where ratings did not confirm expected developmental progressions, the behavioral indicators were refined to more explicitly capture their intended meanings.

The finalized, validated PNP competency framework follows, along with explanatory material providing context for its development and potential uses. The PNP competency framework represents a rich resource for numerous stakeholders within the pediatric nurse practitioner community, including pediatric nurse practitioners themselves, educators, employers, and certifying bodies.

PNCB Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Competency Development Framework

Purpose

The PNCB developed this PNP competency framework to outline professional expectations inherent in the role of the pediatric nurse practitioner in acute and primary care. Because the pediatric nurse practitioner has multiple responsibilities, the PNP competency framework is structured around seven role-based competency areas: Clinician, Collaborator, Advocate, Educator, Scholar, Leader, and Innovator. Each competency area includes several exemplars of ways that the competency is manifested in practice. Developmental progressions associated with each exemplar reflect progressions of increasing proficiency that may be achieved over time and with experience based on interests and aptitudes, as well as on organizational facilitators and barriers. Potential uses of this document include:

- providing a basis for consideration of future updates to PNCB's Pediatric Nurse Practitioner recertification program requirements, which is one goal of PNCB's multi-year [Continuing Competence Initiative](#).
- establishing benchmarks for individual PNPs when engaging in self-assessment and self-reflection during their personal career journeys;
- assisting PNP faculty and clinical educators in explaining career progression in the two roles; and
- providing information that may be of interest to employers, hospitals, organizations, and human resources personnel for staff development purposes.

Special Notes

1. This PNP competency framework is intended to be a guideline, not a standard.
2. It is understood that the milestones are part of a continuum that starts during graduate education. Further, it is recognized that the focus for entry-level PNPs in the first year of practice is role transition and clinical care, such that these exemplars may not emerge for a few years into practice.
3. This document is not a clinical ladder and should not be used to inform employer hiring decisions or decisions related to promotions.
4. It is not expected that all PNPs will attain Level 3 milestones in all competency areas or exemplars during their careers.
5. Variables that can influence the attainment of competency milestones could include, but are not limited to, organizational facilitators and barriers (e.g., access to resources, personnel, and mentoring; staff development budget; environmental disruptors) or available scenarios in which behavioral progressions can be demonstrated.
6. Job title is not a limitation to attaining competencies or a direct link to competency areas and attainment of those milestones.
 - For example, a nurse practitioner does not need to be in a leadership role to reach Leader competency milestones; a nurse practitioner does not need to be a scientist or researcher to attain Scholar milestones.
7. It is expected that behavior(s) from higher level milestones may emerge in lower levels, but the performance of those behaviors will be demonstrated more consistently at the higher level.

Development

The PNCB began this project by establishing a Task Force of pediatric nurse practitioners with subject matter expertise from throughout the country who hold the organization's credentials: CPNP-AC, CPNP-PC, or both certifications. Two Task Force members also held the PNCB Pediatric Mental Health Specialist (PMHS) certification. Four members of the PNCB Board of Directors served on the Task Force. With the assistance of the Task Force, a PNP competency framework was drafted. Peer focus groups then reviewed the full draft document and suggested revisions to various elements. All the focus group volunteers actively held one or more of PNCB PNP credentials. In February to March 2023, PNCB conducted a survey of PNPs to validate the work put forth in this PNP competency framework.

Acknowledgements

During the development of this PNP competency framework, a variety of resources, evidence-based research, and relevant references were explored regarding both PNP practice and competency development in general. The PNCB gratefully acknowledges these underlying, foundational resources, which are listed in the bibliography that follows.

Bibliography:

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The final **Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Competency Framework** appears below. Several competencies are further defined in a Glossary of Terms; these are shown in **blue font**.

Competency Area: Clinician			
<i>Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioners address the unique characteristics and healthcare needs of newborns through young adults, and their families. Applying specialty expertise, they use evidence-based practice, clinical judgment, and professional engagement to provide high-quality, family-centered care for diverse pediatric populations.</i>			
Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Clinical expertise	Promotes pediatric health and safety; diagnoses and manages acute and chronic conditions relevant to one's care setting	Efficiently diagnoses and manages multisystem and complex clinical conditions	Expertly diagnoses and manages multisystem, atypical, and complex clinical conditions; serves as clinical expert
Clinical decision making	Analyzes and synthesizes data from a variety of sources to support decision making	Evaluates conflicting or ambiguous information and reconciles it relevant to clinical presentation	Instinctively and efficiently utilizes and filters available information to guide clinical decision making relevant to each patient.
Workflow management	Identifies and incorporates techniques to manage patient workflow	Optimizes own care delivery in a cost-effective, efficient manner, while addressing barriers and constraints	Economically and efficiently manages multiple clinical and organizational priorities
Patient education	Provides education to individual patients and families, respecting their unique developmental stages and needs, and health literacy levels	Develops educational materials related to clinical conditions that provide readily consumable information for diverse pediatric patient populations	Provides guidance to other healthcare professionals about how to deliver relevant and impactful pediatric patient education
Clinical resource	Uses specialty expertise to advise patients and families about clinical concerns specific to children, adolescents, and young adults	Serves as a resource to colleagues within the practice setting	Acts as clinical resource to other healthcare professionals, organizations, or entities outside the practice setting

Competency Area: Clinician

Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioners address the unique characteristics and healthcare needs of newborns through young adults, and their families. Applying specialty expertise, they use evidence-based practice, clinical judgment, and professional engagement to provide high-quality, family-centered care for diverse pediatric populations.

Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Population health	Recognizes population health risks to individuals and recommends preventive measures	Implements changes within own practice or organization to improve population health	Participates in initiatives to improve population health outcomes at the community, state, or national level
Cultural humility	Recognizes and minimizes impact of own biases in order to provide culturally sensitive care	Challenges biases in self and others to improve care for children from diverse cultural backgrounds	Challenges systems that perpetuate imbalances in the provision of care
Ethics	Recognizes ethical concerns and identifies team members with whom to collaborate	Serves as a resource to colleagues for ethical topics	Guides resolution of ethical challenges related to a variety of situations
Accountability	Takes ownership of clinical decisions; open to receiving feedback	Role models behaviors that promote accountability in others	Creates an organizational culture of accountability and trust

Competency Area: Collaborator

Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioners cultivate trusting relationships with patients, families, and team members. They are an integral part of these dynamic, complex relationships, facilitating shared decision-making processes.

Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Inter- and intra-professional care coordination	Contributes to collaborative care using pediatric expertise and skills	Leverages skills and resources of self and all team members to facilitate best patient outcomes	Leads teams to facilitate care and improve clinical outcomes
Shared decision making	Participates in shared decision making with patients and families to influence and improve care	Models effective shared decision-making process with team members	Builds evidence-based models for effective shared decision making
Information sharing	Clearly conveys complex, information that is tailored to the identified audience	Identifies and eliminates barriers to information sharing within systems	Develops systems for information sharing to ensure transparency and enhance continuity of care
Transformational communication	Engages in effective listening and therapeutic communication to build trust and connection	Implements strategies to improve or promote goal-directed communications	Develops new communication strategies to empower and inspire others

Competency Area: Advocate

Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioners recognize the unique vulnerabilities of the pediatric population, and serve as a voice for children of all ages and their families. Pediatric NPs seek and promote healthy behaviors and environments for themselves, healthcare teams and the communities they serve.

Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Patients and families	Anticipates needs and assists pediatric patients and families in navigating the healthcare system	Acts on behalf of patients and families at the multidisciplinary or organizational level	Advocates on behalf of patients and families at the community or population level
Self and colleagues	Recognizes own and others' at-risk behavior and emotional distress	Practices self-care, role models healthy behaviors, and counsels others in need of self-care	Leads initiatives that support workplace well-being
The pediatric NP profession	Advances knowledge of the pediatric NP role to families and health professionals	Champions pediatric NP leadership in decision making at the organizational or community level	Promotes state or national policies related to advancing the pediatric NP role
Health policy	Understands impact of existing organizational, state, and federal health policies on pediatric care	Engages with policymakers (e.g., letters, lobbying) regarding policies that affect pediatric health	In partnership with others, influences policy leaders to effect changes in policies that impact pediatric health
Health equity	Develops awareness of differences in healthcare systems and health outcomes across populations	Applies knowledge of social determinants of health in practice initiatives to minimize inequities in the provision of pediatric care	Leads health equity initiatives that improve access to care and reduce health disparities

Competency Area: Educator

Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioners promote optimal health as educators who transfer knowledge regarding the unique needs of children of all ages.

Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Knowledge sharing	Recognizes opportunities for, and readily engages in, informal knowledge sharing with the interprofessional team	Develops and delivers formal education content in academic, clinical, or community settings	Serves as content expert to provide comprehensive training and/or education to organizational or national audience
Mentoring	Seek out resources to support development of mentoring abilities and mindset	Fosters growth, respect, and trust in relationships with mentees	Mentors to develop multiple aspects of mentee's personal and professional growth
Precepting	Seeks resources to begin developing own precepting skills	Precepts students as they develop knowledge and skills for the role of a pediatric care provider	Develops criteria for precepting outcomes and evaluates effectiveness of precepting program

Competency Area: Scholar

Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioners seek out knowledge to support evidence-based practice, and engage in activities, leading to the discovery, dissemination, translation, and implementation of knowledge to optimize pediatric outcomes.

Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Evidence-based practice	Examines existing practices and identifies opportunities for improvement	Develops and leads projects using evidence-based practice to improve pediatric care	Evaluates project outcomes and incorporates into standards of care
Knowledge generation	Identifies gaps in literature that impact own practice	Participates as a team member in research initiatives	Leads research initiatives
Dissemination	Disseminates scholarly work at the organizational level	Disseminates scholarly work at the local or state level	Disseminates scholarly work at the national or international level
Authorship	Contributes information or provides data for use in publications	Actively contributes to the body of work of publications	Leads the development of publications

Scholarly work (including, but not limited to, publications, research, presentations)

Publications (including, but not limited to, peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, textbook editor)

Competency Area: Leader

Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioner are leaders who use specialty expertise to influence change. They develop relationships and use systems thinking to impact pediatric care, health outcomes, organizations, and the profession.

Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Leader in clinical practice environment	Recognizes strengths of other healthcare team members and draws upon their expertise	Serves as role model and encourages others to adopt behaviors and attitudes that optimize patient care	Empowers others to function at their highest potential to improve or maximize models of service delivery
Leader in the organization	Participates in organizational committees and task forces	Identifies needs for organizational changes; leads and sustains implementation	Serves in leadership role in organizational initiatives
Leader in the profession	Obtains and utilizes resources provided by professional organization(s)	Actively participates in professional organization activities or initiatives	Serves in leadership capacity in professional organizations; mentors aspiring leaders

Competency Area: Innovator

Definition: Pediatric nurse practitioner are innovators who create or introduce new methods, ideas, processes, or products through implementation of creative solutions to enhance care delivery.

Exemplars	Behavioral Indicators		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Quality improvement and safety	Recognizes opportunities to optimize safe and effective delivery of care and recommends improvements	Develops and implements safety and continuous quality improvement initiatives	Leads safety and quality improvement initiatives to drive sustained, systemic change
Clinical technology	Seeks opportunities to integrate clinical technology into current practice	Leverages opportunities to broadly apply innovative clinical technology to enhance pediatric patient care or practice workflow	Leads the integration of clinical technologies across the organization or clinical specialty to create standardized procedures and best practices
Information technology	Seeks opportunities to use information technology to improve care delivery and support clinical decision making	Pioneers innovative information technology solutions to improve workflows and patient care	Uses complex information systems to drive efficiencies, improvements in pediatric care delivery, and organizational change
Clinical practice innovator	Generates creative approaches to enhance pediatric care and seeks feedback regarding feasibility	Develops and implements innovative services and solutions (for example, outreach programs, health promotion and illness prevention initiatives)	Evaluates impact of innovations; inspires others to innovate