Nurses Supporting Nurses

Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program

The Ten Practical Steps: At a Glance

An implementation checklist for establishing a Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP) in long-term care.

Phase	Practical Step	Implementation Checklist
1 Design & Setup	**1** Validate the Home's Value of a NOPSP	☐ **Identify the need.** Position the NOPSP as a solution to specific challenges within the home, such as onboarding, communication, teamwork, or retention. ☐ **Align with existing priorities.** Connect the NOPSP with the home's goals, initiatives, and strategies to build support and visibility.
	2 Assign a NOPSP Coordinator	☐ **Appoint a NOPSP Coordinator.** Select a coordinator with strong connections to orientation and new hires. ☐ **Build on existing roles.** Whenever possible, integrate the NOPSP coordination into existing workflows and responsibilities. ☐ **Provide protected, flexible time.** Ensure the coordinator(s) has dedicated time that can adapt to changing program needs. ☐ **Share coordination responsibilities.** If required, distribute tasks between multiple team members to strengthen sustainability, continuity, and knowledge retention.
	3 Define Structure and Workflow	☐ **Define and maintain program scope.** Establish clear boundaries to ensure the NOPSP remains focused, realistic, aligned with union requirements, and sustainable within available resources. ☐ **Embed the NOPSP into existing orientation processes.** Identify where the program fits within current onboarding activities and workflows. ☐ **Map the NOPSP workflow.** Define the key steps of a clear and repeatable process. Include the tasks needed to maintain the program over time.

Build Capacity

4 Clarify Roles and Expectations

- ☐ **Define clear roles, expectations, and program boundaries for all participants.**

  Reduce confusion, prevent role overlap, and promote consistent implementation.

- ☐ **Ensure all participants, including the NOPSP Coordinator, have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.**

  Provide a one-pager outline to reference throughout the partnership.

5 Develop Tracking Tools

- ☐ **Centralize program tracking.**

  Maintain the Orientation Partner pool and partnership tracker in one location to support organization and coordination.

  - ☐ **Track key milestones.**

    Record important dates, partnership status, and follow-up activities to support timely check-ins.

6 Select and Support Orientation Partners

- ☐ **Develop a sustainable Orientation Partner pool.**

  Build a diverse group across units and shifts through proactive recruitment, leadership support, and clear communication about the role's purpose and expectations.

- ☐ **Select Orientation Partners intentionally.**

  Choose individuals based on experience, interpersonal skills, team credibility, and a genuine commitment to supporting others.

- ☐ **Support ongoing engagement and recognition.**

  Maintain participation through regular communication, appreciation, feedback, and sharing the impact of the role.

7 Prepare Participants for the NOPSP

- ☐ **Provide intentional, scalable training and communication.**

  Equip Orientation Partners with training and new hires with clear program information.

3 Implement

8 Pair New Hires with Orientation Partners

- ☐ **Pair Orientation Partners thoughtfully.**

  Consider scheduling, work location, shift alignment, availability, and overall fit to support a successful six-week partnership.

- ☐ **Use standardized email templates.**

  Support consistency and simplify administration with ready-to-use communication tools.

- ☐ **Provide coordinator support throughout the partnership.**

  Guide the relationship through introductions, check-ins, and closing communication.

9 Troubleshoot Common Challenges

- ☐ **Communicate proactively to address potential challenges early.**

  Regular check-ins help identify and resolve issues before they escalate.

- ☐ **Plan for program sustainability.**

  Shared oversight and clear processes support continuity during periods of change.

4 Evaluate & Improve

10 Adapt to Feedback

- ☐ **Administer ongoing evaluation.**

  Take an opportunity to seek feedback on participants experience in the program.

- ☐ **Take actions to improve the program.**

  Based on the feedback received from the evaluation, make changes to improve the experience for newly hired nurses and Orientation Partners.