

NAPNAP Position Statement on the Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

The acute care pediatric nurse practitioner (ACPNP) is a professional who provides cost-effective, evidence-based quality care for acutely, critically, and chronically ill infants, children, adolescents, and young adults in a variety of settings. For many decades pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) in acute and critical care settings have been responsible for the management of patients with illnesses characterized by impending or existing organ system instability and failure. More recently the recognition of the unique competencies and the important contributions of the ACPNP to continuity of care have contributed to the role's expansion (Clinton & Sperhac, 2005; Jackson et al., 2001; Kline, Reider, Rodriguez, & Van Roeyen, 2007).

The ACPNP meets the specialized physiologic and psychological needs of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults with complex acute, critical, and chronic health conditions. The focus of care includes complex monitoring and ongoing management of intensive therapies in a variety of settings, including but not limited to inpatient and outpatient hospital settings, emergency departments, and home care settings.

Adopted by the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners' Executive Board on June 26, 2010. This statement replaces the 2004 NAPNAP Position Statement on the Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner.

All regular position statements from the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners automatically expire five years after publication unless reaffirmed, revised, or retired at or before that time.

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Specialty areas of practice are varied and continue to emerge. Collaboration with an interdisciplinary team is essential for optimal patient care.

The ACPNP is an experienced nurse, masters or doctorally prepared, with education in acute care that includes didactic and mentored clinical experiences in pediatric acute, critical, and chronic care settings. The ACPNP may possess additional educational preparation to perform standardized procedures. Programs for the ACPNP adhere to curricular standards set by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties.

In 2004 the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) expanded its PNP Scope of Practice to reflect the role of the PNP in providing care to infants, children, adolescents, and young adults who are acutely, critically, and chronically ill. Specific components of the ACPNP role vary depending on the practice setting, the patient population, and the type of employment arrangement (Percy & Sperhac, 2007). The scope of practice of an ACPNP includes providing direct patient care management in a variety of settings. ACPNP practice includes independent and interdependent decision making and direct accountability for clinical judgment. Components of management include, but are not limited to, performing in-depth histories and physical examinations, interpreting diagnostic studies, prescribing/ordering medications and therapies, and developing and evaluating therapeutic management plans (NAPNAP & Society of Pediatric Nurses, 2008).

The ACPNP also performs a full complement of functions integral to the role including research activities, interdisciplinary education, consultation, advocacy, and support of systems within the work environment (Kline et al., 2007; Verger, Marcoux, Madden, Bojko, & Barnsteiner, 2005). Gaining practice privileges is a requirement for an ACPNP as set forth by The Joint Commission. The process for becoming credentialed and obtaining practice privileges is based on institutional policy and the state nurse practice act (NAPNAP, 2010).

NAPNAP advocates for:

1. ACPNP scope of practice that includes direct patient care responsibilities, education, leadership, and research.
2. Continued development of educational standards to prepare the ACPNP for practice.
3. Comprehensive ACPNP programs that focus on the management of complex health issues in acutely, critically, and chronically ill infants, children, adolescents, and young adults and incorporate well-child growth and development as well as basic health promotion and disease prevention.
4. Certification of the ACPNP in keeping with national accreditation standards for nurse practitioners ([Pediatric Nursing Certification Board, 2010](#)).
5. Ongoing evaluation of the impact and value of the ACPNP role for quality improvement using outcome measures.

In addition to providing direct evidence-based patient care to infants/children/adolescents/young adults with life-threatening illnesses and organ dysfunction or failure, the ACPNP negotiates health care delivery systems, monitors and ensures the quality of health care practice, provides family-centered care, and demonstrates cultural competency.

NAPNAP is an organization whose mission is promoting optimal health for children through leadership, practice, advocacy, education, and research.

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