Australian College of Neonatal Nurses Incorporated (INC1300211)

Holistic Assessment Tool

Novice - Advanced Beginner Level

Australian College of Neonatal Nurses Incorporated (INC1300211) *Holistic Assessment Tool for Novice-Advanced Beginner Neonatal Nurses 2025



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Version Control

The ACNN Holistic Assessment Tool – Novice to Advanced Beginner

The ACNN (INC1300211) Holistic Assessment Tool – Novice to Advanced Beginner will remain current until 2030 (5 years) or earlier when modifications are required.

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Novice – advanced beginner level in neonatal nursing

At novice level, a neonatal nurse has had little experience with situations at hand in the NICU/SCU. They may struggle with deciding which tasks are most relevant and have an inability to use discretionary judgement. As the neonatal novice gains knowledge, they move into an advanced beginner stage where they are able to draw on enough situational experience that they can identify patterns and responses. At this stage, the neonatal nurse is still focused on rules and guidelines that have been taught and is reliant on support from mentors/colleagues.

Use of the holistic assessment tool

A holistic approach to assessing nurse knowledge and performance involves observing the neonatal nurse's overall role performance. This includes observing and assessing their communication, ethics, technical skills, cultural awareness, attitudes, knowledge, professional behaviors, clinical decision making, and critical thinking.

As an assessment of practice, assessors must, therefore, carry out the observation in the context of the neonatal nurse's interactions with infants and families. This method is useful in determining the nurse's skills, knowledge, values and attributes within their practice.

A holistic assessment of practice is a valid model of measuring core skills and competencies, but should be conducted via a collaborative relationship between neonatal nurse and the assessor. This ensures mutual understanding of the process, and helps the neonatal nurse feel confident in the process and its purpose.

During the assessment, the assessor uses their knowledge and professional judgement, drawing inferences and tacit awareness to form conclusions about the neonatal nurse's practice. Therefore, use of this tool requires sufficient duration of observation in the nurse's usual clinical context to achieve a reliable assessment.

At the conclusion of the observation period, an essential component of the assessment is the reflection process. Assessor and neonatal nurse discuss the observation, performance, strengths and developing skills/knowledge to provide guidance on further development.

Novice to advanced beginner level holistic assessment

Neonatal nurse's name: _____ Date: _____

General allocated patient information

Standard 1: Thinks critically and analyses nursing practice

1.1 Novice – Advanced Beginner – First patient to 1 year

1.1.1 Includes families and colleagues in the critical assessment of care across the continuum, acknowledging individual and complex needs.

1.1.2 Engages in the continuous process of self-assessment through critical reflection.

1.1.3 Ensures that nursing practice is ethical, culturally safe, and respectful of the family's values, beliefs and preferences.

Supporting evidence

Standard 2: Engages in therapeutic and professional relationships

2.1 Novice – Advanced Beginner – First patient to 1 year

2.1.1 Introduces self to families and fosters an environment of open communication between the family and the multidisciplinary team.
2.1.2 Ensures all forms of communication are complete, unbiased, culturally appropriate and literacy sensitive in consumer-friendly language.
2.1.3 Recognises the need to actively listen to families to identify and document social, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs.
2.1.4. Builds relationships with families from diverse groups including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), and marginalised groups.
2.1.5 Maintains privacy and confidentiality of all information and acts to preserve the dignity and safety of families in difficult situations.
2.1.6 Aware of the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights and the role of advocating and protecting the rights of the neonate and family.
2.1.7 Utilises verbal and non-verbal communication techniques with families and colleagues in a respectful way that promotes collaboration.
2.1.8 Communicates and collaborates in multidisciplinary teams to facilitate safe and appropriate care for neonates and families.
2.1.9 Maintains professional boundaries during interactions with families and colleagues, including the use of social media, ensuring compliance with health policies, professional codes of ethics and professional codes of conduct.

Supporting evidence

Standard 3: Maintains capability for practice

3.1 Novice – Advanced Beginner - First patient to 1 year

3.1.1 Identifies own knowledge base and acts within own scope of practice.

3.1.2 Reflects on own practice and discusses with colleagues and mentors.

3.1.3 Utilises local governing documents that are relevant to neonatal care, including best available evidence-based clinical guidelines, policies and procedures.

3.1.4 Identifies the need for continuing professional development activities and an awareness of national and international neonatal nursing professional organisations to engage in professional development activities.

3.1.5 Assumes responsibility and accountability for documenting and summarising own continuing professional development activities via paper-based records, web-hosted methods, or app-based recording in line with AHPRA requirements.

Supporting evidence

Standard 4: Comprehensively conducts assessments

4.1 Novice – Advanced Beginner - First patient to 1 year

4.1.1 Identifies and uses a range of holistic assessment techniques to collect and document relevant and accurate information to inform practice and decision making.

4.1.2 Describes clinical, cultural, emotional, financial, psychosocial and/or spiritual components of assessment.

4.1.3 Discusses with colleagues local resources available to meet identified needs of neonates and families.

4.1.4 Describes concept of developmental appropriateness of the neonatal environment.

Supporting evidence

Standard 5: Develops a plan for nursing practice

5.1 Novice – Advanced Beginner - First patient to 1 year

5.1.1 Discusses and collaborates with colleagues and family to initiate and implement a plan of care that includes priorities, actions and outcomes.

5.1.2 Identifies the need for individualised care that is based on family centred, cultural and developmentally supportive care principles.

5.1.3 Identifies and discusses with colleagues when modification to plan of care is required and documents appropriately.

Supporting evidence

Standard 6: Provides safe, appropriate, and responsive quality nursing practice

6.1 Novice – Advanced Beginner - First patient to 1 year

6.1.1 Shares relevant information with colleagues, such as families' preferences, values and social situation in order to deliver optimal care.

6.1.5 Ensures safe practices and use of equipment by adhering to workplace guidelines, policies, standard operating procedures, monitoring and reporting procedures.

6.1.2 Practises to mitigate medication and other clinical errors and participates in reporting, monitoring and evaluating to reduce risk for neonates.

6.1.4 Understands and responds to protection and safety issues for neonates and families according to local laws, policies and procedures.

Supporting evidence

Standard 7: Evaluates outcomes to inform practice

7.1 Novice and Advanced Beginner – First patient to 1 year

7.1.1 Identifies factors contributing to normal and altered transition in the neonatal period when evaluating outcomes.

7.1.2 Collaborates with team members to discuss and evaluate individualised care delivered and optimal care outcomes.

7.1.3 Reflects on clinical experiences and applies reflective learning to the evaluation and adaptation of goals, priorities, plans and outcomes of the neonate and their family.

Supporting evidence

Outcome

Achieved expected standards ☐

Working towards expected standards ☐

Assessor's name: _____

Assessor's signature: _____

Date: _____

Collaborative discussion and feedback / strengths and areas to improve/ development plan: