



Re-envisioning the Emergency Nurse Practitioner Role

An AAENP Position Statement

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It is the position of AAENP that the patient population served by the ENP represents a unique and significantly differentiated set of competencies and behaviors from other APRN population foci. Therefore, in collaboration with our national colleagues and regulatory stakeholders, AAENP supports the development of an ENP population.

The Consensus Model for Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Regulation emphasizes that APRN scope of practice should be determined by the patient's healthcare needs rather than the practice setting.¹ As such, nurse practitioner (NP) education, certification, and licensure must align with the specific population served. Yet, evidence indicates that current education, certification, and licensure practices do not consistently align with the Consensus Model's recommendations.²

Between 2019 and 2022, the number of NPs working in emergency settings increased by over 50%, totaling approximately 27,000 NPs.^{3,4} However, this figure may not provide an accurate representation of the total number of NPs providing emergency care, as this type of care extends beyond the typical emergency department and urgent care settings.

Despite the development of competencies, scopes, and standards of practice, and a certification exam for the Emergency Nurse Practitioner (ENP) specialty, state licensure opportunities do not exist. The absence of ENP licensure hinders state regulation, contributes to role ambiguity during hiring and credentialing processes with employers, and raises concerns about reimbursement. These issues have the potential to limit patients' access to care. Comprehensive practice analyses and a growing body of literature emphasize that ENPs possess a unique set of knowledge, behaviors, and scopes of practice that do not align with any single existing population foci. In this case, the Consensus Model suggests that a new APRN population focus may emerge. Proper alignment of education, certification, and licensure is crucial for NPs providing emergency care, as it is integral to the future of healthcare delivery.

DESCRIBING THE POPULATION

ENPs function in a unique role providing "care for patients across the continuum of both lifespan and acuities."⁵ While most patients are discharged following care, some patients require that the ENP "initiate complex diagnostic workups and be prepared to provide acute resuscitation and stabilization of conditions for patients requiring transfer to higher levels of care in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team."⁵

Consistent with a new population focus as defined by the APRN Consensus Model, AAENP has established educational standards and core competencies and has supported the development of rigorous educational programs and a professional nursing certification exam. AAENP has established the scientific foundation for the education, certification, and regulation of ENPs within the following:

- **Scope and Standards of Practice** – Using the Consensus Model and the ENP practice analysis as guiding frameworks, AAENP in collaboration with ENA updated the *Scope and Standards for Emergency Nurse Practitioner Practice*.⁶
- **Competencies for the Emergency Nurse Practitioner** – Using robust data derived from the 2016 national practice analysis, AAENP updated the original Competencies for the ENP⁷ to reflect the ENP's evolving role. In 2021, AAENP and ENA convened the ENP Competencies Work Group and developed a unified set of ENP competencies approved by both organizations' boards of directors.⁸ The National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties endorsed the 2021 ENP competencies.

- **Specialty Certification Exam** – Working with the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board, a national practice analysis of NPs working in emergency care was performed in 2016. A content outline and test blueprint were developed based on these practice analyses. The exam was updated in 2021 based on a repeated practice analysis.⁹
- **ENP Academic and Fellowship Program Evaluation Standards** – AAENP developed a voluntary review process to validate academic and fellowship program inclusion of specialty competencies and knowledge based on objective measures. The Standards for Emergency Nurse Practitioner Academic Program Validation¹⁰ strengthens and sustains the quality and integrity of ENP programs.
- **ENP Core Curriculum** – In collaboration with Springer Publishing Company, AAENP developed the first authoritative resource of foundational knowledge for the ENP. The ENP Core Curriculum is evidence-based and covers emergency care across the lifespan, reflective of the diverse patient mix and care offered by NPs in emergency care.

POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

AAENP acknowledges the potential impact of moving emergency NP practice from a specialty to a population within the following areas:

- Grandfathering of currently practicing NPs in emergency care settings
- Academic curricula
- Accreditation & certification programs
- Regulatory & credentialing bodies
- Employers, health systems, contract management groups
- Commercial and governmental payers/insurers
- Postgraduate fellowship programs

AAENP promotes high-quality, evidence-based practice for nurse practitioners providing emergency care for patients of all ages and acuities in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team.

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