Clinical Site Tips

Clinical sites for graduate nursing students are at a premium due such factors as health care provider workload, clinical space issues, and competition for available sites from other schools. This does not mean that you will not have available clinical sites, but it does mean that a variety of factors must be taken into consideration. Following are some factors that you need to keep in mind when considering a clinical site.

1. You should contact the instructor who will be teaching the clinical course prior to setting up a clinical site for that course. The instructor will try to be flexible in helping you find a site reasonably close to your home area; however, you also need to be flexible as the instructor is trying to assist you in matching the best site for you with the learning objectives of the clinical course. At times you may need to travel some distance for the best site.

2. If you have clinical sites in mind, you instructor will work with you. Keep in mind that the MU Sinclair School of Nursing must have a clinical contract in place with the site prior to you beginning clinical hours there.

3. Putting your requests regarding clinical sites in writing (or email) for your instructor is helpful.

4. The process of obtaining a contract with a clinical site can take approximately 6 weeks, so you need to be patient. There is a specific form and process that must be completed. Thinking ahead is a good idea if you are wanting a clinical site that does not already have a contract with the School.

5. The School has a list of sites where clinical contracts are already in place. However, even where contracts are in place, the site has the right to refuse to take a student or students in a specific semester. This does not mean that you are the problem. It may be that the site has had recent turnover in staff, is short-staffed, is crowded, preceptor needs a break from students, etc. or for some other reason is not available for students at this time.

6. Keep in mind that if your instructor does not approve of the site you prefer, she/he has more knowledge of the type of clinical experience that you need in a specific course. Your instructor will usually be happy to discuss with you the reasons for selecting or not selecting a specific site.

7. Be respectful of your clinical site, including preceptor and other site staff. As stated previously, clinical sites are very competitive and making a good impression is important for both your success at the site and for the School’s future use of the site. If a site has specific requests/requirements (dress, parking, cultural customs, etc.), please do your best to meet those.

8. Needless to say, be professional in your dress and behavior at all times at your clinical site. It is better to have your preceptor tell you that you need to relax a bit, than to complain of what she/he may perceive as behaving unprofessionally.

9. Finally, if you are in a clinical site and it does not seem to be working out well for your educational objectives, notify your instructor. Your instructor will discuss with you the available options. The sooner your instructor is aware of concerns the better it will be for both you and the site.