

The Nurse Becoming Podcast #109 - How to Find a Preceptor

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SPEAKERS

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Hello, hello, welcome back to The Nurse Becoming Podcast. It's your host, Amanda Guarniere, I hope that you are doing wonderfully. Thank you so much for joining me for this episode, I hope you are really enjoying your summer. It is July when this episode is releasing, it's late June when I'm recording it. And yeah, I know that when you're not necessarily on a traditional school schedule, it's hard to feel the shift between the other seasons and summer. But you know, now that my kids are in elementary school, I'm definitely feeling that shift, which is kind of fun to be back in school mode and summer vacation mode again. And if you're listening to this episode, which is about how to find an NP preceptor, then I'm gonna guess that you're in school mode as well. Or, you know, maybe you're listening to this to help your students or other nurse practitioner students in your lives. And yeah, so regardless, I hope that you are doing great and taking some time to maybe slow down a bit this summer, we can't, I can't underscore that enough that regardless of whether it's a change in season, that you are taking some time for yourself and taking some time to rest because we definitely need that now. So we're going to talk about preceptors today. And part of the reason why we're talking about this is I wanted to give you a bit of a preview of what I'll be teaching on a live workshop coming up on July 14, which is the How To Find a Preceptor Masterclass. You can get all the details at theresumerx.com/preceptor. That'll be a Masterclass that I teach live for NP students. And you'll get access to the replay and everything. So that's part of the reason why I'm I'm delivering this episode to you now, because I know this is a big struggle for people. And when I started NP school, back in 2009, I was very fortunate that I went to a program that coordinated all of my preceptors and all of my clinical rotations. And even though I certainly had some complaints at the time, I didn't realize that I was so fortunate. You know, there, of course, were things to complain about. And not every rotation or preceptor was perfect. There was one rotation where I commuted from New Haven, Connecticut to Bronx, New York two-three days a week. And that was a good, you know, two hour commute. And while it was a fantastic rotation, man, that was surely inconvenient. And I remember complaining about that. But in hindsight, you know, I have to laugh, because I didn't know how good I had it with such a valuable rotation that was really completely coordinated for me. And so over the time since graduating, I started to realize that I was an outlier. And that many programs rely on the students to coordinate their own clinical

rotations. And you know, since I've started this business back in 2018, I've noticed and I've heard from my community members, that finding a preceptor is a huge challenge for you, and a huge barrier for you. And it's often something that kind of looms over your head, you know, it's something where maybe you can't enjoy what you're doing now, because you know that you're going to have to find the next preceptor. And for some, this can even affect the timeline of your graduation. Sometimes it has a financial cost- a financial burden, since some preceptors do charge for their time and supervision. And, you know, some of the preceptor matching services cost money as well. So, in this episode, what I want to do is go over the steps to take in order to find and secure your own preceptors and your own clinical rotations. And, you know, we'll go over this at a bird's eye view, because you know, most of these episodes are 20 to 30 minutes at most. And I have definitely more to say and more to teach you about this process. So I'll give you kind of the framework in this episode. And if you want to dive deeper into these steps, and map out the plan together and get your specific questions answered, then I would love to see you at my upcoming workshop on July 14th. And again, you can learn more at theresumerx.com/preceptor. So I'm going to go over four main steps that I want you to take and you know if you're listening to this, please don't feel like you need to take notes, you can always go to the show notes. You know, click the link where you're listening to this episode and you can either read the transcription or the show notes we've been making kind of in a blog post format so that you can easily follow all along. So don't you know, let this wash over you don't scramble to take notes or pull over your car or anything like that. Okay, so step one, I want you to organize and write down your needs. Okay? You first need to know what you're going to be responsible for when it comes to your clinical rotations. This information should come to you from your school, or hopefully be available by asking a few questions. And it's never too early in your schooling to get this information. And the information that you want to get should include the hours required per specialty or rotation, the different parameters of the rotation, for example, who does it need to be with? Right? Does it need to be with an NP? Can it be with a PA or physician? What sort of settings do you need? Based on your specialty track? Those types of things... Next, would be your expected competencies, meaning, what needs to be accomplished during this rotation? Is there a list of procedures you need to check off, that type of thing. And then last is the timeline. So what semesters what months does each rotation need to be completed in? Now, I haven't seen a syllabus or, or program materials from an NP school anytime recently. So I don't know if you're being given this, you know, the first day of school or if this is something that's being delivered to you on a semester basis, when it lines up with that specific rotation. But if you're not getting it sooner than later, then I would ask for it because there's definitely no harm in being prepared. And I think that it's really great to know in advance what you're going to need to arrange for yourself. So that's step one, to organize and write down and collect what you need for your clinical rotations the details. So step two is to find potential clinical sites. And there are few things that you can kind of tap into, so to speak, to find potential clinical sites, you know, what's not going to work is going into Google and typing in, you know, "nurse practitioner preceptors near me", that's not really something that's probably going to help you. You may find that there are different databases with, like professional organizations that you're in or alumni groups. There might be, you know, a preceptor finder board, that type of thing. But here's what I find to be most helpful: First, would be tapping into your existing network. So depending on whether you're going through a program that is somewhat aligned to the nursing role that you had, you may have people that you can, that you can call on. So for example, if you're doing an acute care NP program, and your background, your RN background has been in critical care, then you hopefully have some connections, or some people that you can ask who are providers in critical care. So that might be the, you know, the NP group or the NPs who provided night coverage on the critical care floor that you worked at. Or it might be the actual ICU physicians who worked on your floor. You know, best case scenario, you still work on that floor, and you can pull one aside and say, "Hey,

I'm in an acute care NP program. Does your group precept students? If not, who can you connect me with?" So, having those types of conversations can be really helpful and, and you may need to go back a few rings in your network, you know, it may not be a place where you currently work, it could be a prior place where you worked. Or maybe you're asking people who you know, were recently in NP school. So maybe it's someone who's a few years ahead of you, who you knew when you work together as a nurse, and they're doing the same specialty that you want to do? And, you know, contacting them, "Hey, did you have good clinical rotations? Can you pass along the information?" that type of thing. So really getting creative and thinking about your existing network and really analyzing that spiderweb of connections that you have to try to figure out, okay, who could potentially connect me with someone who's taking the students. So that's kind of the the first layer of ways to find clinical sites is with your existing network, which includes classmates, coworkers, etc. Now, if that's a dead end for you, or you don't have those types of connections, the next place that you can go to is Google Maps. And, you know, what you're going to search for in Google Maps is the types of sites that you know that you need to do a rotation at So, for example, if you are doing the FNP tract and you know that you need certain number of pediatric hours that you want to do at a pediatrician's office with either a pediatrician or you know, a PNP, or someone who works in pediatrics, then you can go to Google Maps, set your preferred commute radius and type in "pediatrician" and see what you find. And keep a list of all these potential places that could be good clinical sites for you. Okay, so in this step, all you're doing really is brainstorming these potential sites. And things that you want to keep in mind, as you make and organize this list is you want to keep in mind your commute, okay, you probably have a limit of the radius in which you can commute. Another thing to consider is the potential opportunities after graduation. Now, this is a little bit of a hack. But if you're doing this research to find great clinical sites, why not also think okay, would this be a great place to work after graduation? Because your clinical rotations are essentially working interviews. And if you can line things up and have a clinical rotation in a place, that is also a great potential place to work, then you may have a better chance of turning that rotation into a job offer once you're getting ready to graduate. And if you're going the route of you know, looking at places that you're just finding in the maps that you're not familiar with, you might consider reading public reviews. And just taking that into account as you are kind of sifting through this list that you've made and deciding which ones you want to reach out to. So step three is to reach out to these potential clinical sites. So hopefully, you've either gotten contact information from network connections, or you've made a list of potential clinical sites based on your searching of maps. And I want you to have a reach out plan. So you can either reach out via email, you could go in person, or you can make a phone call. So choose one of those three methods. And what you want to do is you want to send a preceptor request letter or a preceptor request email, and attach your resume. And you'll basically be introducing yourself and asking if they take students and telling them what you need. If you come to my workshop, I will be providing a bunch of scripts that you can essentially fill in the blanks and use. And you're just gonna send those off and keep track of that outreach on the tracker or the list that you made in step two. And step four. So that was step three, reaching out. And step four is following up. Following up is so important that it deserves its own step. So I want you to commit to at least two follow ups per site about one to two weeks apart. And I recommend this because, you know, sometimes these first inquiries either get missed, or they get buried in the email inbox, or people forget to respond, you know, I've been on the end of that as well. And I always appreciate a nudge, because, you know, my inbox can get kind of hairy and, and I don't always get respond to things in in a timely fashion because of that. So I like to give people the benefit of the doubt and plan to follow up, you know, one to two weeks after that initial outreach. And, you know, ask if they received my first message and reiterate my needs, and there'll be scripts for that as well, if you come to the workshop. So at least two follow ups per site, one to two weeks apart, track it on that tracker or that sheet, however, you're keeping

track of everything. Because you'll want to, you know, if you're if you're reaching out to a bunch of places, then it may, it's hard to keep track of it all in your head. So great to have it written down for sure. So those are the four steps. Depending on your success, you may need to revisit step two, right, depending on how many places you reach out to the first go round and how many places you hear back from, you may need to kind of go back to step two, go back to the drawing board, and find more sites to reach out to. And, you can decide what works for you and whether you want to do this in batches versus repeat the steps for each rotation. I think this will really depend on the number of rotations you need. And the timeline of those. I think it's helpful to batch and to do you know a bunch of similar activities at once meaning sending out a bunch of emails at the same time. But you can obviously do what's best for you. So just to recap those steps. First is to organize and write down your needs that'll hopefully be information that comes to you from school? Step two is to find potential clinical sites either through your existing network, or through the method I described in Google Maps. Step three is to reach out to those potential clinical sites and to send them your official preceptor request. And step four is to follow up, you're going to follow up at least twice if you're not hearing back for each site one to two weeks apart. Now, like I said, we'll be going over this in detail in my upcoming workshop on July 14, the How to Find a Preceptor Masterclass for Nurse Practitioner Students. And I hope to see you there! The site again to sign up is theresumerx.com/preceptor. You can find that link as well as the kind of written version of this episode when you click the link for show notes where you are listening to this episode. So hope to see you at the workshop. Otherwise, I hope this episode is valuable to you. And that this experience of having to find a preceptor feels a little bit less daunting. Now that you know the steps to take. I'll catch you next week!