Advance Nursing Role Synthesis. Defining the Problem As you assess the problem or opportunity for improvement, you will find it helpful to be able to concisely and clearly communicate the project focus to your faculty or mentor and other stakeholders. A concise statement to describe the problem and the opportunity for improvement help you to effectively communicate the problem, and its importance. Concise Description of the Problem and its Importance Here are some tips regarding the development of a problem statement to convey your points: The problem statement or statement of need should: Represent a problem which can be solved, or a situation which can be improved Clearly describe the problem Clearly convey the importance to all stakeholders Clarify your intention and what you hope to achieve When writing a problem statement or statement of need, there is no need to worry about defining a specific outcome or output. Those steps will come later in the planning process. The main idea with a problem statement or statement of need is to communicate in a succinct manner the essence of the problem which you plan to address, and why it is important. As you develop the problem statement, keep in mind the scope of your project and timeframe available. Helpful Reminders Components of a well-written problem statement or statement of need include: Succinct description of the problem (need, or situation to be improved) Location of the problem (unit, organization, etc.) Timeframe Size/scope/implications of the problem Another way to envision the problem statement is to consider the following: Who - who does the problem affect? What - what is the problem/need and its impact? When - when does or did the problem/need occur? Where - where does this problem/need occur? Why - why is it important to fix the problem? Make the Connection As you read through the examples provided below, think about the similarities that are shared across each one. For example, while they each address a different problem, they contain similar elements to allow for a succinct, clear description of the problem and its impact on health outcomes and healthcare delivery: Example A The ACA established new community benefit requirements for nonprofit hospitals which include a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to be completed every three years. Priority needs must be determined and a strategic plan implemented to address each of the needs identified. Rural County Hospital must comply with this legislative requirement in order to maintain tax-exempt status. As such, a CHNA and strategic plan must be completed by 12/31/2021 in order to submit to the IRS (Form 990) with taxes for fiscal year 2021. Note - In this example, there is a legislative mandate which serves as primary rationale for the need. Financial bottom line is the driving factor (maintaining tax-exempt status). Example B Unit 6 West reported an increase in CAUTI rates from 11% to 27% during the first quarter (January through March 2020). One of the National Patient Safety Goals is the prevention of infection. The increased infection rate results in additional medical treatment compromised health status, and in some cases prolonged the hospital stays. As a result, a staff development course is needed regarding guidelines to prevent infections of the urinary tract that are caused by catheters. Note - In this example, there is an increased rate of infection on the unit and compromised health, coupled with the NPSG, to validate the need. Example C At Hillside Hospital, Unit 3 South serves a large patient population suffering from chronic congestive heart failure. During the second quarter (April through June 2020), the 30-day readmission rate for this population increased from 9% to 19%. Recent healthcare legislation (ACA) requires the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to reduce reimbursements to hospitals with notable readmission rates within a 30-day period. As a result, Hillside Hospital could experience reimbursement penalties due to extensive readmissions within the 30-day period. A strategic plan to address discharge planning, care coordination, and home maintenance to manage CHF is needed to promote health outcomes and prevent reimbursement penalties. Note - In this example, there is compromised health and an increased readmission rate, which may result in financial penalties, which serve as validation of need. Defining the Outcome for the Planned Change Practicum Project In order to effectively direct planned change, it is imperative that the problem or opportunity for improvement be clearly defined. Equally important is the development of a clear outcome statement to convey the desired end result of the planned change project. Intended End Result An outcome statement is a comprehensive statement that conveys the intended end result achieved through the work of the planned change initiative. This end result is most often a reflection of the improvement in health outcomes or improved healthcare delivery that will be realized through the planned change initiative. Scope and Feasibility In addition to accurately conveying the intended end-result, project outcomes must align with the time available for project planning, implementation, and evaluation. For example, if you have 8 weeks to plan, implement, and evaluate project outcomes, those outcomes must be do-able within that timeframe. To position the project for success, it is imperative that you establish project outcomes that are feasible to be achieved within the scope of time and resources available. SMART Criteria Effective outcome statements include SMART characteristics (Specific, Measureable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Time-specific). A well-written outcome statement will also: Define what you intend to accomplish through the planned change project. This clear statement of the desired result will keep the efforts focused on what you hope to achieve. State the target date for the accomplishment to be successfully completed. Identify who will be involved. Clarify the indicator for successful achievement. Think About It Take a look at these examples, and consider – do they demonstrate SMART criteria? Can they be measured to determine successful achievement? 20% increase in the number of patients receiving the flu vaccine at Mercy Clinic by 12/31/2020 (baseline = 160 patients accepting the vaccine) 25% decrease in the number of patients readmitted with CHF at Fairfield Hospital by the end of the second quarter, 6/30/2020 (baseline = 16 patients readmitted during the first quarter) 20% decrease in the number of teen pregnancies at Judson High School by 6/1/2020 (baseline = 15 pregnancies)