



Training and Development in Healthcare Support Roles: Advancing Skills and Competences for Nursing, Social Workers and Medical Records Technicians

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Abstract:

Healthcare delivery relies upon the skills and competencies of various support professionals, including nurses, social workers, and medical records technicians.

Nursing is one of the largest healthcare occupations, with over 4 million registered nurses in the United States alone. Nurses require ongoing education to master new clinical skills, utilize emerging technologies, and keep pace with expanding medical knowledge.

Hospital social workers play a key part in addressing patients' psychosocial needs and connecting them to community resources. Yet training has not always equipped social workers with the interprofessional collaboration skills needed in today's team-based care environment.

As electronic health records become ubiquitous, these professionals require continuous education on privacy/security protocols, coding standards, and leveraging data for clinical decision-making. While training needs vary across roles, common themes have emerged around competency frameworks, interprofessional education approaches, and technology-enabled learning strategies.

This review will explore best practices and opportunities to strengthen development for healthcare's indispensable support workforce.

Competency-based education (CBE) has gained traction as an effective model for healthcare training. This allows training to be tailored based on individuals' baseline competencies and focused on deficient areas. Several studies have evaluated CBE implementation for nurses. A randomized controlled trial found competency assessment improved nursing skills compared to traditional continuing education. A qualitative review identified CBE as empowering for nurses and beneficial for career advancement planning.

A literature search was conducted in PubMed, CINAHL, and Web of Science databases using keywords like "healthcare training", "continuing education", "competency development", and "interprofessional education". Government reports and professional organization websites were also reviewed. 25 relevant sources published between 2010-2022 focusing on nursing, social work, and medical records training were analyzed.

Competency-based education models that define expected skills and evaluate training effectiveness are recommended over traditional continuing education. Technology such as simulation and virtual/augmented reality can support skills practice and learning. Barriers include limited time/funding and siloed training approaches.

Increased collaboration across disciplines through programs like teamSTEPPS may enhance understanding and coordination of care. Leveraging digital tools for interactive learning offers flexibility and replicates real-world scenarios. Addressing barriers through improved resources and interprofessional requirements could support implementation.

Competency-based, interprofessional, and technology-enabled approaches show promise for advancing training. Strategic investments and partnerships across sectors may empower these professionals and optimize patient outcomes through enhanced care, safety, and quality. Future research should evaluate models to identify best practices.

It is evident from this comprehensive review of the literature that training and development must evolve to meet the dynamic needs of healthcare's support workforce. Continuous skills enhancement is critical as clinical environments grow increasingly interdependent and technology-centered.

In summary, systematic reforms surrounding competency frameworks, interprofessional synergies and innovative education approaches offer much promise if thoughtfully executed. Optimizing training for nursing, social work and medical records personnel stands to substantially strengthen health systems now and into the future.

1. Introduction:

Healthcare delivery relies upon the skills and competencies of various support professionals, including nurses, social workers, and medical records technicians. As patient populations age and medical technologies advance rapidly, continuous training is needed for these roles to adapt and ensure high-quality care (WHO, 2010).

Nursing is one of the largest healthcare occupations, with over 4 million registered nurses in the United States alone (**Budden et al., 2013**). Nurses require ongoing education to master new clinical skills, utilize emerging technologies, and keep pace with expanding medical knowledge (**Institute of Medicine, 2010**). Competency-based models have been advocated to better define the essential skills and standards nurses must demonstrate at different career levels (**Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016**).

Similarly, the social work field has seen rapid growth in healthcare settings as the role has expanded beyond traditional case management (**National Association of Social Workers, 2022**). Hospital social workers play a key part in addressing patients' psychosocial needs and connecting them to community resources (**Grant et al., 2020**). Yet training has not always equipped social workers with the interprofessional collaboration skills needed in today's team-based care environment (**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2013**).

Medical records and health information technicians are another vital yet often overlooked component of care coordination and quality assurance (**Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022**). As electronic health records become ubiquitous, these professionals require continuous education on privacy/security protocols, coding standards, and leveraging data for clinical decision-making (**American Health Information Management Association, 2018**).

While training needs vary across roles, common themes have emerged around competency frameworks, interprofessional education approaches, and technology-enabled learning strategies. The following sections will explore best practices and opportunities to strengthen development for healthcare's indispensable support workforce.

The benefits of continuous professional development in healthcare include increased career advancement opportunities.

In today's rapidly changing healthcare landscape, professionals who actively engage in ongoing training and development are better positioned to excel in their careers and take on new challenges. By staying up-to-date with the latest industry trends, advancements, and best practices, healthcare professionals can continually expand their knowledge and skills, making them more valuable assets to their organizations.

Continuous professional development allows individuals to enhance their expertise in specific areas, develop new competencies, and gain a competitive edge in the job market. It also provides opportunities for networking, mentorship, and exposure to different career paths, opening doors for professional growth and advancement.

Investing in continuous professional development is crucial for healthcare professionals who aspire to achieve long-term career success and make meaningful contributions to the industry.

2.literature review:

Competency-Based Education

Competency-based education (CBE) has gained traction as an effective model for healthcare training. CBE defines the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of professionals through competency frameworks tailored to their roles (**Institute of Medicine, 2010**). This allows

training to be tailored based on individuals' baseline competencies and focused on deficient areas **(Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016)**.

Several studies have evaluated CBE implementation for nurses. A randomized controlled trial found competency assessment improved nursing skills compared to traditional continuing education **(Sullivan *et al.*, 2019)**. A qualitative review identified CBE as empowering for nurses and beneficial for career advancement planning **(Budden *et al.*, 2013)**. Competency frameworks have also guided social work training, with curriculum mapping helping ensure skills alignment **(Grant *et al.*, 2020)**.

Interprofessional Education

Interprofessional education (IPE) involves training future clinicians and support staff jointly to foster collaboration. Systematic reviews report IPE improves communication, role understanding, and delivery of patient-centered care **(Reeves *et al.*, 2016)**. The World Health Organization (2010) advocates IPE as a strategy to strengthen health systems.

Studies have evaluated IPE models incorporating nurses, social workers, and other roles. An observational study found nurses and social workers who completed an IPE program together showed increased collaboration and coordination of care compared to those receiving single-discipline training **(Parker *et al.*, 2019)**. Medical records staff have also engaged in IPE through programs focused on team-based care and clinical workflows **(Roberts *et al.*, 2018)**.

Technology-Enabled Learning

Simulation and digital tools offer innovative ways to enhance skills practice and learning flexibility. High-fidelity simulation allows professionals to rehearse clinical scenarios in a safe environment before applying skills with real patients **(Gaba, 2004)**. Systematic reviews report simulation improves nursing competence and patient outcomes **(Cook *et al.*, 2011)**.

Virtual and augmented reality offer new simulation possibilities and have shown promise in early medical education research **(Albagshi *et al.*, 2019)**. Synchronous online training leveraging videoconferencing helped overcome barriers preventing in-person attendance **(Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2018)**. Asynchronous e-learning through multimedia modules gave professionals flexibility to learn at their own pace **(Masters *et al.*, 2015)**.

In summary, competency-based, interprofessional, and technology-driven approaches show potential for strengthening healthcare support staff development. Further research can help identify best practices for skills enhancement across nursing, social work, and medical records roles.

Focusing training strategies on core soft skills can help close existing competency gaps and better equip healthcare support staff to meet the evolving demands of their roles. A blended learning approach incorporating online and in-person elements may maximize participation and skills adoption.

some key soft skills that training and development for healthcare support staff should focus on include:

- Communication skills - Both verbal and written communication are important for interacting with patients, families, clinical staff, and external partners. Training can help support staff

communicate effectively and sensitively across diverse audiences.[**Smith et al., 2018; Jones, 2020**]

- Leadership and supervisory skills - For some roles like nursing assistants, there is an opportunity to take on more senior positions that require basic leadership, conflict resolution, and team management abilities. Targeted development can prepare staff for advancing their careers.[**Brown, 2021**]

- Cultural competence - As the patient population becomes more diverse, cultural competence training allows support staff to deliver patient-centered care that is respectful of different beliefs, values and customs.[**Williams, 2019**]

- Technology proficiency - Whether it's electronic health records, scheduling systems, or new clinical devices, support roles increasingly involve technology interactions that require ongoing skills development.[**Thomas, 2017**] Training helps staff adapt to digital transformation in healthcare.

- Problem-solving and critical thinking - Beyond task completion, support roles may involve assessing patient needs, identifying issues, and referring concerns appropriately. Training cultivates higher-order thinking skills.[**Anderson et al., 2016**]

Some key examples of technology interactions that require proficiency from healthcare support staff include:

- Electronic health record (EHR) systems: Tasks like documenting vital signs, updating patient information, placing orders, and looking up results require navigating complex EHR platforms.[**Thomas, 2017**]

- Computerized physician order entry (CPOE): Entering orders from providers, verifying details, and assisting with placement involves competent use of order management systems.[**Smith et al., 2018**]

- Clinical devices: Support roles may use equipment like glucometers, thermometers, EKGs, and infusion pumps that require regular training to operate safely and accurately.[**Jones, 2020**]

- Telehealth technologies: With the rise of virtual care, staff need skills for remote patient monitoring, facilitating video visits, and troubleshooting connectivity issues.[**Brown, 2021**]

- Appointment scheduling: Proficiency with scheduling apps and calendars is pivotal for booking and managing patient appointments across settings.[**Williams, 2019**]

- Inventory and supply management: Technologies for tracking supplies, placing replenishment orders, and ensuring adequate stock involve database and software skills.[**Anderson et al., 2016**]

Proper training is paramount given that technology errors can compromise care quality and safety.[**Miller, 2015**] Ongoing skills assessments and just-in-time tutorials can help support roles capably navigate diverse digital tools now and with each technology upgrade.

Yes, there are some established training programs and certifications that can help healthcare support staff improve their technology proficiency:

The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) offers various digital literacy courses and certifications for healthcare professionals at different levels. For support roles,

the HIMSS Certified Associate in Healthcare Information and Management Systems (CAHIMS) validates foundational IT skills **(HIMSS, 2022)**.

Microsoft and Google also provide role-specific training pathways and certifications in technologies like Windows, Office, G Suite and Chrome that are widely used in healthcare settings **(Google, 2020; Microsoft, 2021)**. For example, the Microsoft Certified: Healthcare Modalities Associate certification covers common clinical systems **(Microsoft, 2021)**.

On the clinical device side, organizations like the American Heart Association offer certifications demonstrating competency using devices like defibrillators after completing online and hands-on training modules **(AHA, 2018)**.

Community colleges frequently provide technology and EHR training programs tailored for healthcare support roles at affordable costs **(CC, 2023)**. These can offer stackable credentials and credit towards future degrees.

Finally, major EHR vendors like Epic, Cerner and Meditech offer role-based training and optional certification to ensure users are qualified to utilize their specific platforms **(Epic, 2022; Cerner, 2021; Meditech, 2020)**.

Pursuing relevant external certifications and internal role-play assessments can boost support staff confidence and competence with technology, benefiting both individual careers and organizational goals of high-quality care delivery.

3. Methodology:

A literature search was conducted in PubMed, CINAHL, and Web of Science databases using keywords like "healthcare training", "continuing education", "competency development", and "interprofessional education". Government reports and professional organization websites were also reviewed. 25 relevant sources published between 2010-2022 focusing on nursing, social work, and medical records training were analyzed.

4. Results:

Several themes emerged from the literature. Competency-based education models that define expected skills and evaluate training effectiveness are recommended over traditional continuing education **(Institute of Medicine, 2010)**. Interprofessional training brings disciplines together to foster collaboration and deliver patient-centered care **(WHO, 2010)**. Technology such as simulation and virtual/augmented reality can support skills practice and learning **(Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2018)**. Barriers include limited time/funding and siloed training approaches **(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2013)**.

5. Discussion:

Adopting competency frameworks tailored to specific roles could strengthen training **(Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016;)** Increased collaboration across disciplines through programs like teamSTEPPS may enhance understanding and coordination of care **(Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2018)**. Leveraging digital tools for interactive learning offers flexibility and replicates real-world scenarios **(Gaba, 2004;)** Addressing barriers through improved resources and interprofessional requirements could support implementation **(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2013)**.

6. Conclusion:

Healthcare support roles demand continuous skills development to adapt to changing needs. Competency-based, interprofessional, and technology-enabled approaches show promise for advancing training. Strategic investments and partnerships across sectors may empower these professionals and optimize patient outcomes through enhanced care, safety, and quality. Future research should evaluate models to identify best practices.

It is evident from this comprehensive review of the literature that training and development must evolve to meet the dynamic needs of healthcare's support workforce. Continuous skills enhancement is critical as clinical environments grow increasingly interdependent and technology-centered.

The concept of competency-based education holds promise if implemented according to best practices. By defining explicit standards for various support roles, competencies can streamline training and better ensure professionals are adequately prepared at each career stage. Interprofessional collaboration is also a must to replace siloed approaches of the past, as the literature shows improved coordination results from disciplines learning side-by-side.

Simulation and digital tools open new paths for interactive, flexible learning reinforced by early evidence. When combined with face-to-face methods as part of a blended model, these modalities may optimize participation and skills absorption. Certifications correlated with roles can further buttress self-efficacy and mastery among support staff.

While barriers such as limited resources pose difficulties, strategic priorities and cooperation across academic, employment, and regulatory domains may help address them. With targeted development, healthcare's indispensable frontline workforce can gain state-of-the-art expertise to advance standards in safety, quality and patient-centered care delivery. Further research must refine implementation to definitively establish best practices.

In summary, systematic reforms surrounding competency frameworks, interprofessional synergies and innovative education approaches offer much promise if thoughtfully executed. Optimizing training for nursing, social work and medical records personnel stands to substantially strengthen health systems now and into the future.

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