

YOUR PLACEMENT

Ontario Shores Center for Mental Health Sciences is a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto Medical School. We understand and embrace our role in advancing the mental health care system and in expanding our research by accepting high school, college, and university students in a variety of positions. Staff at Ontario Shores enjoy sharing their expertise and passion in the field of mental health care with students. We are proud to offer valuable learning opportunities and on-the-job experience to over 300 students each year.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before you start your placement at Ontario Shores you have to be prepared. Make sure that you have completed the checklist below before your first day with us.

- ◆ **Vaccinations;** you are up to date on your vaccinations for: measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, hepatitis B, tetanus and have a laboratory immunization record.
- ◆ **Two-Step TB Test;** you have received a TB test with negative results no more than 8 weeks prior to your start date.
- ◆ **CPIC Vulnerable Sector Check;** if you are over the age of 18, you have received a criminal background check within the past 12 months.
- ◆ **Online Training;** you have completed all of the mandatory online training modules and have proof of completion.
- ◆ **Registration Forms;** all of your required registration forms are complete.

If you have completed everything in the above list you are ready to start your placement!

YOUR FIRST DAY

The first day of your placement will consist of an orientation with other students who are starting at the same time as you. You are required to bring all of your completed registration forms, proof of the completed online modules, proof of immunization and negative TB test results, and the original copy of your CPIC Vulnerable Sector check to your orientation. At your orientation you will receive keys, a photo ID card, a swipe access card, and a personal transmitter to be used in case of emergency. You will be instructed on appropriate use of these items. At your orientation you will also review the Ontario Shores Code of Conduct. Make sure that you know your assigned department or unit and your preceptor before you begin your placement. It is a good idea to contact your preceptor before your first day to agree on a time and place to meet so that you can get started as soon as possible.

YOUR PRECEPTOR

During your placement you will work under the supervision and instruction of a preceptor. Your preceptor is an experienced staff member who works on your assigned unit and who has completed mandatory training in order to be able to offer the best support and guidance to their students. Your preceptor will provide you with the appropriate training, supervise you while you perform your tasks, and give you honest and constructive feedback throughout your placement. They are there to support you and your learning – don't be afraid to ask them questions!

SKILLS FOR YOUR SUCCESS

It is not only important that you follow the Code of Conduct and meet any expectations set by your school, your preceptor, and your department, but that you strive for success during your placement. We value your learning and goals, and you should too! The following are some tips to help you have the most successful placement at Ontario Shores.

Confidence in your Abilities: Be confident in and comfortable with your knowledge, your experiences, and the skills that you have already acquired. Focus on what you can do rather than what you haven't learned yet.

Willingness to Learn: Always be open to opportunities to expand on your knowledge. Approach new situations with excitement, enthusiasm, and confidence. Never be afraid to ask questions!

Kindness and Compassion: During your placement, you are a face of the Ontario Shores staff; keep this in mind when you are interacting with others both inside and outside of the hospital. Always be polite when speaking with others, maintain eye contact, and introduce yourself to new people. Listen to the person who is speaking and answer questions to the best of your ability or direct questions to someone who has the answer.

Respect for Your Colleagues: At Ontario Shores we strive to create a welcoming environment for patients, staff, and visitors. This starts with how staff treat each other. Get to know the people you are working with, speak positively of others, and resolve problems in a respectful, collaborative manner.

Humility: You are not able, nor are you expected to do everything; know your limits. If there is a task that you find difficult or that you are unsure of, ask for help. If you need support, there are always resources to help you.

TIPS FROM A FORMER STUDENT

It is always good to listen to advice and to learn from others' experiences. The following tips were written by a former nursing student at Ontario Shores in respect to mental health nursing, however, many of them can be applied to all student placements as they discuss many universal attributes, not only of mental health, but of any healthcare setting.

Evolve your Nursing Practice; Embracing the Mental Health Curriculum: First and foremost, before stepping foot at Ontario Shores, it is imperative to familiarize yourself with the materials taught in class. This body of knowledge is the holy grail of mental health nurse teachings. Some of the most mental health specific nursing skills are provided in a multitude of ways; everything from understanding stigma, to Psychotic Disorders, Depressive Disorders, and Bipolar Disorders. If you concrete your understanding of theory, then you can evolve these skills in preparation to the clinical setting. By preparing oneself, you will be ready to experience an avenue like none other, mental health nursing.

Ontario Shores Recovery Model - CHIME: When working at Ontario Shores, it is important to understand and embrace CHIME:

CONNECTION. This is the innate desire to connect with one another. It is important that we drive the patients to connect with the community around them.

HOPE. It is the nurse's role to be hopeful when the patient is not, and to remain hopeful until the patient can stimulate hope themselves.

IDENTITY. When the patient is admitted, they are at their most ill, and during their first assessment they will often identify as their illness. This can reflect negatively on oneself, and so it is important to emphasize that the patient is not their illness, and that their illness is instead a part of them.

MEANING. It is important that one finds meaning in their life.

EMPOWERMENT. It is important for nurses to reinforce that the patient is the expert at whom they are and that they are in control of their life.

This recovery model is the focus at Ontario Shores, it is everything that is not clinical and is what is most important to the patient.

Setting Continuous Goals; Reflect, Evaluate, Action! Having only a semester to work in mental health nursing, it is imperative that you learn as much as possible. That is why it is important to set weekly goals. By setting goals, you force yourself to learn new materials and ideas weekly. You do not want to get stuck in a rut and perform your routine practices. This can cause you to go weeks without refining your practice. Instead, you want to take each experience and reflect critically. Through reflection you can evaluate where there would be room for improvement and from there, set goals and act. Through this philosophy, you are continuously growing and expanding your practice.

Familiarize Yourself with the Unknown; Ask Questions You Do Not Know. Never subject yourself to a situation which you know nothing about. The last things you want as a nurse is to bite off more than you can chew. That is why you should always identify personal weak points in knowledge and expose them for others to correct. Never be afraid to ask questions. This goes strongly for medication administration. Know the medication you are giving! It is better to be humble in your knowledge, rather than ignorant to what you do not know. Remember, we are responsible for the lives of vulnerable people. The more you expose yourself to the unknown, the greater your knowledge becomes.

Understanding Documentation; Your Legal Lifeline. At the end of the day, whatever was documented is what you performed. If you did not document a note on a situation that you worked on, then legally you did nothing. This could lead to legal consequences in the case that the situation leads to unwanted outcomes. This means that everything you do in clinical must be documented. This includes absolute accuracy in Mental Status Assessment, Activities of Daily Living, SBAR, and SCAPE notes. These documents could save your career down the line. Do it not only for your safety, but for the safety of the patients as well.

Understanding Concurrent Disorders; The Path to Recovery. One aspect to mental health nursing is that there exists a relationship between a patient's mental status, and their substance use. You will find that plenty of your mental health patients will have a Concurrent Disorder. This is where the patient suffers both a mental illness, and a substance use disorder. It is important to identify that usually the substance use disorder exacerbates their mental illness. With this in mind, you can familiarize yourself with a 12-step based recovery program; you can utilize these resources into your practice. This approach can yield many positive benefits, both to your practice, and most importantly, the patient.

Advocating for the Voiceless Patient; Finding Sense through Nonsense. Some of the mental health patients that you discover will be very mentally ill. So ill, that their mental capacity is deemed incapable to consent. This could be consent to treatment, consent to health information, or consent to sexual activities. The opinions expressed by these patients could often be ignored, and it is important that this does not happen. They may be unable to consent to treatment, but the essence of what they are trying to say has intrinsic value. A patient might be speaking nonsense to you, but to them they are trying to express their needs. By decoding these messages, it's our duty to advocate for these concerns when we can. Find sense through their nonsense.

The Healthcare Team; Your Hidden Professional Family. Focus on being integrated into the healthcare team using your communication and listening skills. Also, be reliable for your team when they need you, because when you need them, they will be there for you. As students, we are just children in the healthcare family, learning to grow. By relying on the others around you that are more experienced, you can ensure optimal growth in your practice. Also, respect your team and the differences you have. By building a stronger team, the most successful unforeseen challenge becomes. They say it takes a village to raise a child, so it's fair to say it takes a healthcare team to raise a nurse.

Placing Yourself in Uncomfortable Situations – Expanding Your Practice. Ontario Shores will likely be the first time you step inside a psychiatric facility. As you will learn, the facility is full of experiences that you will likely have nothing to compare to, and so you will likely be very uncomfortable at times. However, this is only a great thing for you. The only way to learn is to be uncomfortable. You will likely experience situations with patients that you have never experienced before. Exposing yourself to individuals who have Schizophrenia, exhibiting visual and/or auditory hallucinations, or a patient with Bipolar Disorder who is exhibiting a period of mania to a period of depression. These experiences can be frightening yet fascinating at the same time. Through learning to deal with tough situations, it leaves you with the skills to overcome similar situations again. Thus, expanding your practice.

Share your Experiences; You are not Alone. Lastly, as a student nurse, you will encounter experiences that will leave their mark on you and it is healthy to identify that you are not alone through this. Many other nurses and healthcare professionals have gone through the same experiences you have, so share your stories with them. They will have all the insight, and knowledge to settle any unsettling feelings within your heart. To be a nurse means to care, but it also means to be there for one another, through thick and thin. As a student nurse, you have joined the family of nurses on a life lasting, and life changing career.

With the information you now possess, go forward and indulge your developing nursing practice into something wonderful.

-Jacob O., Student
Nurse