Employing a Nurse: Risk Assessment Tool
Healthy Practices

APNA has produced a suite of resources to help general practices employ nurses and optimise their role in the general practice setting. Fulfilling these aims will help build Healthy Practices that deliver positive outcomes for their communities through nursing skills and expertise.

This Risk Assessment Tool can assist general practices in identifying and assessing the risks to be managed when employing a nurse.

Working with nurses in general practice can bring many benefits to your practice, including shared clinical workload, improved organisation of practice systems, improved quality management (including accreditation), increased practice income and improved patient care through a teamwork approach.

This risk assessment should be conducted in conjunction with **Resource 17 Employing a nurse: Benefit assessment tool**, which helps you identify the potential practice benefits of employing a nurse. By completing this risk assessment, you will be encouraged to critically think about risks your practice may face and how these are best managed.

The examples provided in the following table are based on real challenges that practices sometimes experience. You must take into account your own situation and describe risks specific to your practice. The 'likelihood' and the 'impact' of risk vary between practices and should be adjusted to suit your practice.

Table 1: Risk Assessment Tool

Examples of risks	Analysis *Adjust for your circumstances, then determine rating using Risk Scale (Table 2)		Explanation of risks	Your practice strategies Does this apply to your practice?
Insufficient space to accommodate a nurse, e.g. there is no dedicated consulting room for the nurse	**Likelihood**	Likely*	- Consider re-allocating work spaces, sharing consulting rooms or expanding current facilities	☐ Yes ☐ No [Include your own responses and actions to minimise the risk]
	Impact	Major*		
	Risk Rating	3		
Challenges attracting a nurse with the right skills	**Likelihood**	Likely*	- Be clear about the practice's expectations of the nursing role	☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact	Moderate*	- When advertising the position, ensure the role and responsibilities are clear in order to attract the right applicants	
	Risk Rating	2	- When interviewing, discuss the nurse's current scope of practice and consider their interest and willingness to expand their scope of practice through professional development - Contact APNA, your Medicare Local or your Primary Health Network for assistance	

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Employing a Nurse: Risk Assessment Tool

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Adverse patient outcomes as the result of a nursing activity, e.g. the nurse undertakes an activity that is outside the scope of their practice	**Likelihood**	Unikely*	- Ensure the practice understands and supports the nurse to work within their scope of practice - Provide adequate induction, orientation and support to the nurse - Ensure practice maintains professional liability insurance for its employees - Ensure there are documented policies and procedures for all activities undertaken by the practice - Have discussions with the nurse about their scope of practice and whether/how it could be expanded	☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact	Minor - Extreme*		
	Risk Rating	1-5		
Insufficient workload for the new nurse	**Likelihood**	Unlikely*	- Be clear about the practice's expectations of the nursing role - Prepare a position description that describes nursing roles - When interviewing nurses, specifically enquire about their skills and experience in the activities that will be part of their role - Ensure all staff understand what the nurse can do	☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact	Major*		
	Risk Rating	2		
Low understanding of employment conditions for a nurse, e.g. the practice does not adhere to the minimum conditions in the relevant nursing award	**Likelihood**	Likely*	- Contact the Fair Work Commission to obtain relevant awards and minimum conditions of employment - Ensure a draft employment agreement is written before commencement of employment	☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact	Moderate*		
	Risk Rating	2		
Low level understanding of occupational health and safety/ work safety requirements – practices are responsible for providing a safe working environment for their employees	**Likelihood**	Unlikely*	- Check minimum requirements with the relevant state/ territory health and safety body - Consider an extra focus on occupational health and safety for nurses due to possible role in infection control, waste management, sharps management and the need for staff immunisation - Comply with RACGP accreditation requirements	☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact	Moderate*		
	Risk Rating	1		
The practice does not achieve or maintain RACGP accreditation, which threatens the availability of Practice Nurse Incentive Program (PNIP) payments	**Likelihood**	Unlikely*	- Ensure preparation for accreditation commences immediately on application for PNIP (for unaccredited practices) or 15 months out from next due date (for accredited practices) - Engage nurses to work in partnership with others in the practice to prepare for accreditation especially in areas of vaccine management and infection control (see **Resource 16 Achieving and maintaining RACGP accreditation** and **Resource 21 The nursing role in general practice accreditation**)	☐ Yes
	Impact	Major*		
	Risk Rating	2		

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Examples of risks	Analysis *Adjust for your circumstances, then determine rating using Risk Scale (Table 2)		Explanation of risks	Your practice strategies Does this apply to your practice?
Changes to the PIP, PNIP and MBS items, funding and eligibility can change, which may affect the business model for employing a nurse, e.g. changes to health assessment or care planning MBS item descriptors and the roles of nurses	Likelihood	Likely*	- Medicare support for nurses in general practice has been demonstrated for many years - Keep updated with changes to MBS and make adjustments as necessary	☐ Yes
	Impact	Moderate - Major*		
	Risk Rating	2-3		
Failure to comply with PNIP conditions during an audit by Medicare, e.g. the practice has made an error when calculating nursing hours and has to repay money to Medicare	Likelihood	Likely* (Risk of Audit)	- Ensure understanding of PNIP guidelines - Accurately complete PNIP quarterly confirmation statements - Keep accurate records of nursing staff hours worked	☐ Yes
	Impact	Major*		
	Risk Rating	3		
Identify additional practice risks here:				
	Likelihood			☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact			
	Risk Rating			
	Likelihood			☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact			
	Risk Rating			
	Likelihood			☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact			
	Risk Rating			

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Examples of risks	Analysis *Adjust for your circumstances, then determine rating using Risk Scale (Table 2)		Explanation of risks	Your practice strategies Does this apply to your practice?
	Likelihood			☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact			
	Risk Rating			
	Likelihood			☐ Yes ☐ No
	Impact			
	Risk Rating			

Table 2: Risk Scale

Connect 'likelihood' and 'impact' to determine the Risk Rating (Table 1). For example, a risk assessed as having a 'major' impact but considered unlikely to happen, has a risk assessment score of Medium 2 (Acceptable Risk).

Likelihood		Impact		
	Very likely	Acceptable Risk Medium: 2	Unacceptable Risk High: 3	Unacceptable Risk Extreme: 5
	Likely	Acceptable Risk Low: 1	Acceptable Risk Medium: 2	Unacceptable Risk High: 3
	Unlikely	Acceptable Risk Low: 1	Acceptable Risk Low: 1	Acceptable Risk Medium: 2
		Minor	Moderate	Major

Impact description

- Low: the risk of employing a nurse in the practice is minor and requires very little or no action.
- Medium: the risk of employing a nurse in the practice is medium and requires some action.
- High: the risk of employing a nurse in the practice is serious and requires action.
- Extreme: the risk of employing a nurse in the practice is extreme and requires definitive action

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