

Tip Sheet – Outcomes vs Objectives

Outcomes and objectives are often confused and used interchangeably in developing NCPD activities and providing documentation. However, these terms are not interchangeable and have different implications in educational design.

When planning a nursing continuing professional development program to comply with ANCC requirements (and be eligible for contact hours), you need to define one or more OUTCOMES for your program. You may develop outcomes to help plan the content and delivery plan for your program, but you do not need to submit this to Maryland Nurses Association when requesting approval.

OUTCOME	OBJECTIVE
A statement describing the overall goal for learners at the end of the educational activity.	Defines the content of an educational activity.
Must be quantifiable and able to be measured.	Highlights the topics that will be discussed during the presentation.
Is based on the professional practice gap and underlying educational need.	Is focused on content delivery.

When developing desired learning outcomes for your program, consider the following.

- Desired learning outcomes address the main thing you want the learner to know or be able to do when the program is completed.
- The learning outcome statement needs to be written in measurable terms and should include the outcome and the metric that the outcome is measured by.
- The learning outcome must tie to the professional practice gap and the underlying educational need. If the underlying need is knowledge, the outcome should be related to measuring a change in the learner's knowledge, etc.
- Please note that the measurable learning outcome is not a list of objectives.
- A long-term change may be the goal of the activity (e.g., a decrease in falls), but the learning outcome should relate to the measurable change that occurs at the end of the educational activity and not weeks, months, or years later.
- Examples:
 - At the end of the activity, 80% of learners will achieve at passing score on the post-test. (change in knowledge)
 - At the end of the activity, 80% of learners will report that they have had an increase in knowledge related to the content of the activity. (change in knowledge)
 - At the end of the activity, 80% of learners will successfully complete a return demonstration of peripheral IV placement on a mannequin in the simulation lab using the new IV materials. (change in skill)
 - At the end of the activity, 70% of learners will report an intent to change their practice based on the content presented in this activity. (indirect measure of change in knowledge and likely change in practice)

Note: Be sure that when you develop your evaluation plan you will be collecting data that will allow you to determine whether the desired outcome has been met, which will help demonstrate whether the gap has been narrowed.