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What is the role of the nursing student in a public health emergency?

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Introduction

- Fall 2020 El Paso was on the national news for the high case counts and hospitalization rates
- Attempted to work with local emergency management to find ways students could help
- Local workforce affiliate had grant money to pay students to be patient care techs

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Purpose

- Preserve clinical placements and achieve hours for students during the pandemic
- Provide an innovative way to support surge staffing
- Be of help to the local hospitals



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Methods

- Senior students were offered opportunity to do PCT hours on same units they had clinical
- Had to apply and be qualified by the Texas Workforce Commission
- Paid \$18/hr
- Allowed hospitals to float one of their own techs to high need area because a student PCT was there to help

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Results

- 18 students were qualified
- The process was laborious and lengthy
- At its best the model provided much needed help and seamless transition to employment
- Students found it challenging to do clinical hours plus PCT hours



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Implications for Practice

- Students can be of help during public health emergencies
- Best to have students complete clinical hours first, then do PCT hours
- It is complex but the same preceptors can be used for clinical and PCT hours
- Would work directly with hospitals to onboard these students vs. with a governmental agency