University of South Alabama, College of Nursing
Family Nurse Practitioner Track, Frequently Asked Questions

What is a family nurse practitioner?

A family nurse practitioner (FNP) is a master’s or doctorally prepared advanced practice nurse who provides advanced nursing care to families and family members of all ages in primary care clinics, health departments, rural health clinics and other out-patient settings. FNPs work collaboratively with other health team members to provide holistic health care that includes health promotion, disease prevention, and diagnosis and management of episodic and chronic illnesses.


Is the entire program online or do I have to come to campus for some classes?

Classes are online. All FNP students come to campus at least one time during the program for an intensive class and skills lab session that usually lasts 3-4 days. This session is scheduled, during the first clinical course (CMN 569).

What type clinical preceptors and clinical sites do I need and how many clinical hours do I need?

Clinical preceptors can be MDs, DOs or nurse practitioners (NPs). Every FNP student must have a minimum of 100 clinical hours with an NP (nurse practitioners do not have to be FAMILY nurse practitioners) or the 100 hours can be divided among more than one NP.

CMN 569 – Fall semester – 60 hours in a family site
CMN 572 - Spring semester – 90 hours in a pediatric site and 90 hours in a women’s health site. Women’s health must include pre and post natal care of the mother as well as routine gynecological care.
CMN 575 – Summer semester – 180 hours in an internal medicine or diabetes specialty site
CMN 576 – Fall semester – 180 hours in a family site

Can I complete clinical hours where I live and who arranges clinical sites?

The majority of FNP students complete clinical hours in their home communities or within driving distance of their home communities. Students in remote areas have sometimes had to travel outside their communities to find clinical sites. Students are responsible for finding appropriate clinical sites. If a student cannot locate a clinical site in their home area, faculty is often able to provide names of nearby sites that have been used by previous FNP students.
Our Standard Response.

Specialty tracks within the College of Nursing’s graduate program require a practice component. Although faculty assists students in locating appropriate practice/clinical sites, it is ultimately the student’s responsibility to secure a site and preceptor if indicated. Students who are unsuccessful in being accepted by an agency in their home community may have to travel to another area to complete practice requirements or withdraw from the program. Please review the list of clinical affiliations found under the “Current Student” tab on the College of Nursing Web Site at http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/con/students/clinicalagencies.html. If there is not a clinical site listed near you or you are interested in a site not listed, negotiations should be initiated as soon as you begin the program through the Track Coordinator for your specialty.

**Can I complete clinical hours in the hospital or nursing home or home health agency where I work for pay?**

All clinical hours for the FNP track are completed in outpatient clinics.

**I see names of clinical affiliation sites for:**

http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/con/students/clinicalagencies.html

**but none of the sites are near me. What does this mean?**

The affiliation list on the webpage is simply a list of clinical agencies with which USA has a long term affiliation agreement. Most FNP students use clinical sites that are not on the website list. The contract process is just a little different for sites that are not on the list and will be explained by faculty after students are enrolled in a clinical course.

**Can I work full time and do well in the FNP program?**

FNPs work alongside physicians and do many of the same things that physician do. FNP students must learn to provide this high level care for both genders and patients across the lifespan so a great deal of planned study time is necessary to do well in the program. Many FNP students work full time while they are taking core and support courses. Once enrolled in the clinical courses, many students find it necessary to cut back to part time work.

**Is there a “state board” test for FNPs?**

Rules and regulations for practicing FNPs are determined by state boards of nursing so they vary, somewhat, from state to state, but most states require that all NPs pass one of two national certification examinations. FNP certification exams are offered by American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) and by American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Program graduates are eligible to sit for either of these exams.