



Urgent Care Clinician Competencies

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1. Introduction

Urgent Care clinicians must provide timely, high-quality care for a wide range of conditions, from minor illnesses to life-threatening emergencies. In this fast-paced, resource-variable setting, they must quickly assess patients, use sound clinical judgment, perform essential procedures, and determine the appropriate disposition. All of this must be accomplished within a fast-paced and resource-variable environment

The Urgent Care Clinician Competencies document defines the core expectations for clinicians practicing in the Urgent Care setting. It establishes a standardized framework that outlines the essential knowledge, clinical skills, and decision-making capabilities required to safely and effectively manage patients.

This competency framework is intentionally aligned with the Graduate Fellowship in Urgent Care Curriculum, which serves as a comprehensive, detailed training standard for the specialty. While the fellowship curriculum provides an extensive and in-depth outline of Urgent Care medicine, this document translates those expectations into a concise, practical format that reflects real-world clinical practice.

2. Purpose and Importance

The purpose of this document is to -

- **Standardize clinical expectations** across Urgent Care clinicians, ensuring consistency in patient care delivery
- **Bridge training and practice**, aligning day-to-day clinical competencies with fellowship-level standards
- **Emphasize clinical decision-making**, including differential diagnosis, risk stratification, and disposition planning
- **Support quality and safety**, by reinforcing recognition and management of high-risk conditions
- **Provide a clear framework** for onboarding, performance evaluation, and professional development

By focusing on both what clinicians do and how they think, this document ensures that Urgent Care clinicians are equipped not only with procedural skills but also with the clinical judgment necessary to deliver safe, efficient, and high-quality care.

3. Scope

These competencies apply to all clinicians practicing in the Urgent Care setting and are designed to reflect the baseline scope of Urgent Care medicine, including the:

- Evaluation and management of acute conditions across all major organ systems
- Performance of essential Urgent Care procedures
- Care of special populations
- Integration of diagnostic data into clinical decision-making
- Delivery of coordinated systems-based care

4. Core Competency Domains

The following domains outline the core competencies expected of Urgent Care clinicians. These competencies reflect the practical application of the fellowship curriculum and define the essential clinical skills, decision-making capabilities, and professional behaviors required for safe and effective Urgent Care practice.

4.1 Emergency Stabilization

Recognizes and initiates management of life-, limb-, vision- and organ-threatening conditions.

- Performs rapid assessment of unstable patients

- Initiates appropriate stabilization (airway, breathing, circulation)
- Recognizes high-risk presentations (e.g., ACS, sepsis, stroke, anaphylaxis)
- Activates EMS and facilitates appropriate transfer to a higher level of care

4.2 Clinical Evaluation & Decision-Making

Applies structured clinical reasoning to evaluate patients and guide care.

- Performs complaint-based evaluations across Urgent Care patient presentations
- Develops appropriate differential diagnoses
- Identifies red flags and high-risk features
- Applies risk stratification to guide management
- Determines appropriate disposition (discharge, urgent follow-up, ED transfer)

4.3 Diagnostic Interpretation

Interprets diagnostic data in the context of clinical presentation.

- Performs interpretation of:
 - X-rays
 - EKGs
 - Laboratory studies
- Understands the limitations of diagnostic testing
- Integrates clinical findings with diagnostic results to guide care management

4.4 Core Condition Evaluation

Provides evaluation and management of common Urgent Care conditions across all major systems.

- Cardiopulmonary (e.g., Asthma, Pneumonia, Chest Pain evaluation)
- ENT (e.g., URI, Pharyngitis, Otitis Media, Otitis Externa, Dental Issues)
- Gastrointestinal (e.g., abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting)
- Infectious disease (e.g., cellulitis, UTI, conjunctivitis)
- Dermatologic (e.g., rashes, bites, allergic reactions)
- Neurologic (e.g., headache, dizziness)
- Genitourinary / Gynecologic/ Sexual Health conditions (e.g., STI, vaginal discharge, UTI/urethritis, painful scrotum, vaginal bleeding, pregnancy and pregnancy-related issues)

- Orthopedics and Trauma (e.g., Fractures, Dislocations, Sprains, Strains, initial assessment, stabilization, and management of trauma)
- Behavioral health presentations (e.g., anxiety, depression, overdose)

4.5 Procedures & Interventions

Performs core Urgent Care procedures safely and independently.

- Laceration repair (superficial and layered closure)
- Incision and drainage of abscesses
- Splinting and immobilization of injuries
- Joint reductions (e.g., nursemaid's elbow, simple dislocations)
- Foreign body removal (skin, eye, ear, nose, vaginal)
- Digital nerve blocks and local anesthesia
- IV placement, medication administration
- Basic wound care

4.6 Special Populations

Adapts evaluation and management for higher-risk or specialized patient populations.

- Pediatric patients (e.g., fever, respiratory illness, injury)
- Pregnant patients (e.g., abdominal pain, vaginal bleeding)
- Immunocompromised patients (e.g., infection risk assessment)
- Occupational injury and illness (e.g., work-related MSK conditions, exposures)
- Suspected Abuse/Neglect
- Neurodivergent disorders
- Hearing, speech impairment, visually challenged
- LGBTQ+
- Cultural and religious
- Non-English speaking

4.7 Coordinated Care Delivery & Compliance

Delivers care that is safe, coordinated, and aligned with regulatory and organizational standards.

- Provides clear discharge instructions and return precautions
- Determines appropriate follow-up and referrals
- Completes accurate and efficient documentation
- Collaborates effectively with clinical teams and referral networks.
- Timely results management of outstanding diagnostics.

- Recognizes and complies with local/state/ federal regulatory and public health reporting requirements.

5. Summary

This framework serves as a foundational standard for clinician performance and supports ongoing efforts toward excellence, consistency, and alignment with national Urgent Care training and Accreditation Standards.