

We, in the Center for Education and Development, believe that:

- Lifelong learning is the responsibility of the nurse and is essential to maintain and increase competence in nursing practice. Professional development requires nurses' acceptance of accountability and responsibility for their practice.
- Continuing professional nursing competence is essential to the provision of safe, quality health care.
- Assurance of continuing professional nursing competency must be shaped and guided by nursing leaders.
- The nurse actively partners with the nursing professional development educator in the educational process and in the maintenance of the nurse's continuing professional nursing competence.
- The nursing professional development educator incorporates the roles of facilitator, change agent, consultant, leader or researcher in the learning activities that support the nurse in developing and maintaining professional nursing competence.
- Self-directed learning is an integral part of continuing education, staff development and academic education.
- Use of adult learning principles contributes to effective professional development activities.
- A variety of educational options are necessary to meet the diverse needs of the nursing population, including but not limited to, academic education, experiential learning, consultation, teaching others, professional reading, distance learning, research and self-directed activities.

- Various learning activities are used to resolve current knowledge or skill deficits of the nurse to ensure continuing professional competence.
- Ongoing evaluation of educational activities is essential to maintain and enhance professional development and the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care.
- The practice of nursing professional development is guided by principles of ethics.

Reference: Scope and Standards of Practice for Nursing Professional Development. American Nurses Association, Washington, D.C. 2000.

St. Joseph's Healthcare System is committed to the professional development of the Registered Nurse and related nursing personnel at all levels of the organization. Both the departments of Nursing and Human Resources provide policies and procedures that place significant emphasis on continuing formal education as well as on-site educational offerings, participation in professional organizations, and attendance at professional meetings and conferences. Approved budgeted monies are used for these educational activities.

Registered Nurse Orientation

Newly hired RNs attend Registered Nurse Orientation (RNO) immediately after New Hire Orientation. The RNO curriculum augments the initial education of newly hired St. Joseph's RNs with clinical and professional topics, including information in keeping with standards established by the New Jersey State Board of Nursing, New Jersey Department of Health, and other regulatory agencies, as well as professional organizations such as the American Nurses Association (ANA).

The purpose of the RNO program is to provide information to the newly hired nurse and to assess his/her professional competencies as they relate to safe and effective patient care. Competencies are evaluated within the three domains of interpersonal skills, technical skills and critical thinking skills. The orientation process is utilized to develop an action plan that will enable the newly hired nurse to achieve a high level of specialty practice within appropriate time frames.

Specialty orientation is offered along all service lines including Adult and Pediatric Critical care, Medical Surgical, Perioperative, Emergency, Nephrology, Oncology, Pediatrics and Maternal

Child nursing. The length of each orientation is individualized depending on the patient population and the achieved competencies of the nurse.

The behavioral objectives state that at the end of orientation the RN will demonstrate:

- Application of St. Joseph's mission, vision and values;
- Safe, effective, and population-based nursing practice through the application of recognized standards of practice and St. Joseph's policies and procedures;
- Safe, effective and evidenced-based nursing practice grounded in nursing research;
- Actions as a patient advocate using the principles of Watson's Theory of the Science of Caring;
- Knowledge of the performance improvement process and national benchmarking used at St. Joseph's;
- Communication skills that foster the development of effective relationships with patients, families, and the interdisciplinary team;
- Documentation skills that are legible, comprehensive and meet legal requirements;
- Effective use of resources including technology (informatics), supplies, materials, references, and people;
- The ability to evaluate individual patient care outcomes and take steps to improve them.

ONGOING EDUCATION

The department incorporates the evidence-based concepts of Patricia Benner's "Novice to Expert" framework into educational programs.

Ongoing education is provided based on the needs of patients in each specialty area. Results of performance improvement activities, new products and technology, new and existing standards of care, changes to regulatory requirements, and staff requests form the basis for an ongoing educational plan for each nursing unit. Programs are offered across all shifts and days of the week. Various methods are used to ensure that learning occurs: lecture/discussion, electronic, self-directed, multi-media, case studies, grand rounds to name a few. Annual education requirements are accomplished through successful completion of a web-based program titled "Learning Harbor."

Part of annual education requirements include completion of selected clinical competencies that are evaluated in actual patient care situations and require each nurse to demonstrate required knowledge and skills annually. Evaluators could be peers, supervisors, or the unit-based nurse educator depending on the competency required.

Nurses are encouraged and supported in attendance at educational programs both on site at the Medical Center and outside St. Joseph's. The Center for Education and Development maintains a course catalogue on the system Intranet. Education programs are offered free of charge to St. Joseph's nurses.

The Center for Education and Development is an approved American Heart Association CPR Training Center. Adult and Pediatric courses include Heart Saver, BLS Provider and Advanced Life Support courses for the public, and professionals.

EDUCATORS

Master's prepared Nurse Education Specialists and Unit Educators, who in many cases are also certified in their specialty area, support staff in the competency process across the continuum. The role of the educator is to develop education curriculum that meets the learner's needs and accomplishes the educational plan. The role includes that of teacher, role model, facilitator, change agent, and consultant. Educators work closely with staff nurse preceptors to assist new staff with socialization and skill acquisition on each unit.