

## **CARE: CLINICAL ADVANCEMENT AND RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM BYLAWS**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the MHS Clinical Advancement and Recognition of Excellence program (C.A.R.E. Program) is to reward and recognize professional excellence, to provide the Registered Professional Nurse the opportunity for advancement and increased compensation, and to acknowledge clinical expertise at the bedside/clinical setting.

**Objectives:**

1. To enhance patient care through clinical excellence.
2. To improve job satisfaction, encourage recruitment, aid retention efforts, and to improve the nurse's engagement to the institution.
3. To provide opportunities to enhance professional development and encourage the development of clinical expertise.
4. To provide an outcomes-based model that accurately demonstrates the expertise of the bedside nurse.

A C.A.R.E. Committee will be established at each campus which is governed and administered by the Registered Professional Nurses who have achieved CARE status. In addition, a system-wide C.A.R.E. Steering Committee will meet quarterly to review policy and outcomes of the program and make system-wide recommendations. The Steering Committee will be advisory in nature and will have no direct jurisdiction over hospital campus committee function. The Steering Committee will include the Chairpersons of the C.A.R.E. Committees of each hospital campus, the C.A.R.E. Coordinator, RN staff members, and representatives from management and nursing education.

The members of each campus C.A.R.E. Committee shall elect three (3) officers per campus:

1. Chairperson
2. Vice Chairperson
3. Secretary

The Chairperson is responsible for the administration of the campus C.A.R.E. Program and will also preside over all the committee meetings.

The Vice-Chairperson shall in the absence of the Chairperson assume all responsibilities as noted above. The Vice-Chairperson shall also be responsible for review of all C.A.R.E. maintenance portfolios with assistance as needed from members of the committee.

The Secretary shall maintain the attendance sheets and minutes of all committee meetings. Minutes of all meetings shall be submitted to the Chief Nurse Executive within two weeks of the meetings and all campus and steering committee minutes will be forwarded to the Nursing Council.

An Administrative Representative, the C.A.R.E. Program Coordinator, shall serve as the administrative liaison with full voting rights. Nurse managers and nurse educators will be invited to participate as needed.

## **C.A.R.E. Program Representatives**

Each hospital unit will be invited to send at least one (1) C.A.R.E. program representative who will be responsible for educating colleagues about the C.A.R.E. process and who may attend meetings. The committee officers in addition to ten (10) reviewers/appraisers will be elected / selected by the C.A.R.E. program representatives to review clinical portfolios and make recommendations for C.A.R.E. The appraisers shall be limited to two (2) members from the same unit except for the Committee Officers. These appraisers should be working toward reaching the Clinical Scholar level. Appraisers are expected to attend 80% of the meetings, will be reimbursed or granted time to attend meetings, and will receive credit for maintenance of their own C.A.R.E. status.

## **Meetings**

C.A.R.E. program meetings will be held at least quarterly. The purpose of the C.A.R.E meetings is to discuss changes in policy and criteria, and to provide a forum for the assessment of registered nurses who are seeking C.A.R.E. All registered nurses who participate in the C.A.R.E program may attend C.A.R.E. meetings. Appraisers are expected to attend all meetings and must attend a minimum of 80% of meetings.

## **Officer Election Process**

A nominating committee shall be established consisting of two (2) members from the C.A.R.E. committee (not running for officer position) to represent staff nurses, and the C.A.R.E. program coordinator representing administration:

1. The administrative liaison (C.A.R.E program coordinator) will send out self-nomination ballots to all C.A.R.E. program members.
2. Officer elections will be held at the December meeting of the C.A.R.E. Committee.
3. The election will be held by secret ballot at the December meeting.

## **Term of Office**

The term of office for all elected officials will be for three (3) years. In the event that an elected official cannot complete the term of office, the members of the C.A.R.E. Committee shall appoint a new officer.

- JSUMC: forthcoming elections = December 2018
- SOMC: forthcoming elections = December 2018

## **Sub Committees**

Subcommittees will be formed and will meet as needed.

## **C.A.R.E. Status for Chairpersons**

Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons shall be exempt from submitting renewal applications for their C.A.R.E. status during their term of office, and for one renewal after completing/resigning their term of office.

Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons will submit, for the record, a Portfolio Cover page with the Forces of Magnetism on their C.A.R.E. renewal date.

***ADVANCEMENT ELIGIBILITY***

**Eligibility for Current RN Staff**

1. All current RN staff are eligible to participate in the C.A.R.E. program.
  - a. First time applicants, regardless of their years of employment, begin their advancement at the Clinical Fellow Level (Level II).
  - b. Registered Nurses may advance in sequential order, one level at a **time**, at a minimum of twelve (12) month intervals.
2. Nurse Managers, Assistant Nurse Managers, Nurse Educators, Clinical Coordinators, Clinical Nurse Specialists, Faculty, and Case Managers, if they return to staff positions, may apply immediately to the appropriate C.A.R.E. program level as long as they meet all of the criteria for that level.
3. Per Diem nurses are not eligible for C.A.R.E., however, a per diem RN who transfers to a full time or part-time status may apply to the appropriate CARE level as long as they meet all of the criteria for that level and have completed their probationary period.
4. Per Diem nurses transferring back to a full or part-time status who were advanced within three years prior to Per Diem status must notify the C.A.R.E. committee of their status change. The appropriate C.A.R.E. level will be reinstated with the original Maintenance date.

**Eligibility for Newly Hired Registered Nurses**

1. Experienced RNs
  - a. Newly hired Registered Nurses with a minimum of three (3) years of experience may apply for the most appropriate CARE level as listed in the “Timelines for New Hire C.A.R.E. CLEP Advancement” table below as long as they meet all of the criteria.
  - b. If the above criteria cannot be met, eligibility returns to that of the Newly Graduated Registered Nurse with the noted time limits.

<b>Timelines for NEW HIRE C.A.R.E. CLEP Advancement</b>		
<b>Month of Hire</b>	<b>Submission Date</b>	<b>Planned Advancement</b>
September October November	March 1	April

December January February	June 1	July
March April May	September 1	October
June July August	December 1	January

2. Newly Graduated RNs

- a. Nurse Clinician – Level I: Registered Nurse has completed hospital and unit orientation, and the three month probation period.
- b. Clinical Fellow – Level II: Registered Nurse has practiced within the Meridian Hospitals Corporation for a period of fifteen (15) months (includes 3 months’ probation).
- c. Clinical Resource – Level III: Registered Nurse has practiced in the role of Clinical Fellow – Level II for one (1) year and has met all the requirements for advancement to Clinical Resource.
- d. Clinical Scholar – Level IV: Registered Nurse has practiced in the role of Clinical Resource – Level III for one (1) year and has met all the requirements for advancement to Clinical Scholar

**SPECIALTY SCHOLARS**

Specialty Scholars are cohorts of Registered Nurses promoting best practices in specialty roles. These cohorts will be guided by designated leaders for that specialty area.

**Eligibility for Current RN Staff**

1. No previous C.A.R.E., status is required to apply for Specialty Scholar status.
2. Registered Nurses who have practiced within the Meridian Hospitals Corporation for a period of fifteen (15) months (includes 3 months’ probation) may apply.
3. Nurse Managers, Assistant Nurse Managers, Nurse Educators, Clinical Coordinators, Clinical Nurse Specialists, Faculty, and Case Managers, if they return to staff positions, may apply immediately as long as they meet all of the criteria.

4. Per Diem nurses are not eligible for C.A.R.E., however, a per diem RN who transfers to a full time or part-time status may apply as long as they meet all of the criteria and have completed their probationary period.

#### **Eligibility for Newly Hired Registered Nurses**

1. Experienced Registered Nurses hired from outside of MHS: RNs with a minimum of fifteen (15) months of experience may apply following the three (3) month probationary period
2. Experienced Registered Nurses hired from within the MHS: RNs who have practiced within the Meridian Hospitals Corporation for a period of fifteen (15) months, inclusive of their three (3) month probationary period, may apply.

Any changes in the Specialty Scholar eligibility or requirements must be submitted to the C.A.R.E. Committee and the HPAE (Local 5058) Executive Board at least four (4) weeks in advance of the proposed change for approval.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

C.A.R.E. is a professional program and all documents **MUST** be submitted accordingly: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Complete the on-line application or manually type the application form.
2. Submit the completed application in full with the required documentation of activities.
3. Submit the application prior to deadlines outlined in the table below.
4. Failure to comply with the preceding steps may result in the rejection of the application and delay advancement until the next scheduled advancement date (three months) provided that the application is resubmitted completed and timely.

#### **Application Documents:**

1. Application forms and information regarding requirements for advancement may be obtained on the:

##### **Meridian Intranet.**

<http://www.meridianhealth.com/health-professionals/nursing-at-meridian/r.n.-c.a.r.e-program.aspx>

##### **Meridian Internet:**

<http://www.meridianhealth.com/health-professionals/nursing-at-meridian/r.n.-c.a.r.e-program.aspx>

2. Nurses who are interested in applying are strongly encouraged to seek guidance information and any necessary educational counseling from the C.A.R.E. coordinator, nurse educator, C.A.R.E. officers or members, and/or manager at least two (2) months before the proposed application date.

3. Applicants for Specialty Scholar status must complete the requirements for that specialty cohort and submit their application to the cohort leader(s) for approval and recommendation to the C.A.R.E. Committee.
4. At JSUMC, applications must be submitted to the Nursing Office, signed-in with the secretary, and placed in the designated file cabinet. All other campuses will submit applications to the C.A.R.E. Committee Chairperson or in the designated place.

<b>Submission Date</b>	<b>Planned Advancement</b>
December 1 <sup>st</sup>	January
March 1 <sup>st</sup>	April
June 1 <sup>st</sup>	July
September 1 <sup>st</sup>	October

5. Applications received after the above dates will be returned to the applicant to be resubmitted at the next submission date. When the application is resubmitted, all required criteria must reflect the new application date.

## **REVIEW PROCESS**

### **Responsibility**

1. Two C.A.R.E. Committee appraisers will be assigned by the Chairperson to review each application/portfolio.
2. The appraisers will review each application/portfolio, verify the information contained in the portfolio, and if necessary contact the C.A.R.E. candidate for additional information.
3. The appraisers will present the application and their recommendations to a Review Panel of the C.A.R.E. Committee for approval/disapproval of the application. A two thirds (2/3) majority of those voting will be considered a decisive vote in disputed cases.
4. The Review Panel will forward all recommendations to the Chief Nurse Executive for final review.

### **Review Teams**

Each application will be initially reviewed by the unit representative and the Chairperson for the C.A.R.E. Committee or his/her designee for completeness. Each application will also be reviewed by a team of two (2) reviewers, as follows:

1. Members of the C.A.R.E. Committee will not review their own documents, nor will they vote on the acceptance or rejection of their own application
2. A Clinical Scholar Level IV nurse may review applications for Level II, III, or IV advancement

3. A Clinical Resource Level III may review Level II or III applications.

The applicant's Nurse Manager will complete a form verifying that the candidate meets the performance criteria and all unit competencies. The checklist, along with any comments pertaining to the applicant's clinical performance should be returned to the Chairperson of the C.A.R.E. Committee, prior to the scheduled date of advancement.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure his/her manager receives the notice/checklist. All nurse managers are invited to attend C.A.R.E. meetings.

### **APPROVAL OF APPLICATION**

The Committee for **C.A.R.E.** will submit advancement requisitions to the campus Human Resources department for processing. All C.A.R.E. actions shall be reported to the Nursing Council.

### **DENIAL OF APPLICATION**

An RN may not apply for C.A.R.E. recognition within six (6) months of the application date, or advancement within twelve (12) months if he/she has received a documented discipline notice for a gross clinical infraction, performance appraisal, or has in his/her file of an incident due to a major error, as determined by the applicant's Manager, Director of Nursing Education, and C.A.R.E. Committee Chairperson in consultation with the C.A.R.E. Committee Officers.

If the appraiser team finds that the applicant has failed to meet one or more requirements, the team will cite the specific shortcomings noted, and will submit its findings to the Review Panel of the C.A.R.E.

The committee will transmit these findings to the candidate, together with a suggested learning action plan. The Committee and C.A.R.E. Program Coordinator will also offer the unsuccessful candidate any educational assistance, counseling and/or other help needed to meet the required criteria. Unsuccessful candidates may re-apply at the next scheduled application date.

### **APPEAL OF DENIAL**

Unsuccessful candidates have the right to appeal an unfavorable decision from the C.A.R.E. committee as follows:

1. They may ask to meet with the review team to review and discuss data relevant to the criterion that was not met. Then if unresolved,
2. They may appeal to the C.A.R.E. Committee. This appeal may be made in person or in writing. To hear an appeal, at least ten (10) members of the committee must be present. A two thirds (2/3) majority vote is required to reverse the denial of application. Then if unresolved,
3. They may appeal to the Chief Nurse Executive to review the decision.

## MAINTENANCE OF CLINICAL LADDER STATUS

Maintenance of C.A.R.E. level status will be reviewed every three years during the month of the employee's advancement on the C.A.R.E. program. All nurses who wish to advance to a higher level, and have met the criteria for advancement, may do so at any point during the three-year maintenance period at the regular submission periods.

It is the responsibility of each RN to get the necessary documentation ready for review. During the month the RN is to be reviewed, he/she must submit to the CARE Committee or their designee, all required documentation detailed in the Criteria for Maintenance, verifying maintenance of status.

Applicants are responsible for keeping track of their renewal dates and sending a completed application packet to the committee for review prior to the expiration date.

### A. SPECIALTY SCHOLAR (Level V):

Maintenance of Specialty Scholar status will be reviewed annually during scheduled report out.

1. Reports must be complete and submitted on time.
2. Specialty Scholars are responsible for keeping track of their report due dates.
3. Failure to submit reports on the scheduled report due dates will result in immediate loss of C.A.R.E. status. Specialty Scholar may submit a request for additional time to submit required reports and approval shall be granted on a case by case basis.
4. Failure to attain/maintain Specialty Scholar Eligibility requirements agreed to in the Specialty Scholar contract will result in immediate loss of status. Specialty Scholar may submit a request for additional time to attain or maintain Specialty Scholar requirement, and approval shall be granted on a case by case basis.

### B. GENERIC C.A.R.E. (Levels I-IV):

#### **ALL APPLICATIONS FOR MAINTENANCE MUST BE COMPLETE AND SUBMITTED ON TIME.**

Applicants are responsible for keeping track of their renewal dates and sending a completed application packet to the committee for review prior to the expiration date.

1. Failure to submit an application portfolio during the required submission period will result in immediate loss of status.
2. RN's who are unable to meet some or all of the criteria for maintenance of status because of prolonged illness, military, service, or a similar compelling reason, must notify the



Committee of this in a timely fashion and must furnish documentation of the cause. The Committee will determine whether to recommend an extension of the C.A.R.E. status on a case by case basis. Under normal circumstances, this extension should not exceed three months. This recommendation will be forwarded to the Chief Nurse Executive for final review.

3. Nurses on maternity leave or who have experienced a catastrophic illness may maintain their status for three months after they return to work.

At the Chief Nurse Executive's (CNE) discretion, a review may be triggered for any RN who has been placed on probation or received a Level II gross infraction. This review committee shall consist of the CNE, C.A.R.E. program Coordinator and committee officers. The maximum penalty that may be imposed is demotion of no more than one C.A.R.E. level for a maximum of six (6) months. Applicant's situation will be determined on a case by case basis. This in no way waives the employee's right to grieve any discipline.

### **LOSS OF STATUS**

A. Level II, III, IV RN's may be re-classified under the following circumstances:

1. A C.A.R.E. II, III, or IV who feels he/she cannot maintain educational requirements or other criteria for the position which may include adverse life circumstances, may voluntarily request to be re-classified without prejudice and without precluding future reinstatement.

A letter requesting re-classification should be sent to the Chairperson of the C.A.R.E. Committee as soon as possible. Should he/she decide to reapply for advancement, a completed application will only be accepted on the submission dates as specified in section: Application Process.

2. A level II, III, or IV RN who does not meet the criteria set forth under Maintenance of Status may be re-classified by the C.A.R.E. Committee who will send a list to applicant's nurse manager and /or to Human Resources to change the compensation rate of pay.
3. A level II, III, or IV RN who fails to submit a maintenance portfolio will be re-classified by the C.A.R.E. committee, who will send a notice to the nurse manager and Human Resources to change the compensation rate of pay to that of Clinical Nurse I.
4. RN's who have been re-classified and wish to reapply must wait six (6) months. Applications will be accepted in accordance to the dates set forth in the Application Process. All criteria and requirements must reflect the new application date.
  - a. At the first application period following six (6) months the RN may apply to reinstate at the previous level but may not apply to advance.

5. Specialty Scholars unable to maintain that status upon bi-annual or annual review or due to an approved leave as outlined in the Meridian Leave of Absence Policy will be reinstated to the following C.A.R.E. level:
  - a. Specialty Scholars who were not previously on the C.A.R.E. program and do not complete one year as a specialty scholar will return to the status of Clinical Nurse I.
  - b. Specialty Scholars who were not previously on the C.A.R.E. program and complete one year as a specialty scholar will be demoted to the status of Clinical Fellow II. They may advance to Clinical Resource in twelve (12) months.
  - c. Specialty Scholars who were not previously on the C.A.R.E. program, completed one year as a specialty scholar, and met program expectations will be demoted to the status of Clinical Resource III. They may advance to Clinical Scholar in twelve (12) months.
  - d. Specialty Scholars who were previously on the C.A.R.E. program and met program expectations may remain as a Clinical Scholar until the three (3) year expiration.

**B. There will be no appeal of the decision**

1. Any changes in the above by laws must be presented to the C.A.R.E. Committee and the HPAE (Local 5058) Executive Board at least four (4) weeks in advance of the proposed change. Approval of the HPAE Executive Board and the C.A.R.E. committee representatives shall be needed to implement a change.
2. Changes in criteria, and or generic competencies must be submitted first to the Administrative Representative and then to the CARE Committee.
3. C.A.R.E. competencies will be reflective of the unit competencies on the Registered Nurse Performance Appraisal tool.
4. Specialty Scholar Coordinators will submit reports on the status of Specialty Scholars to the C.A.R.E. Committee Chairpersons.