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PURPOSE:

The Professional Ladder Program (PLP) offers challenge and opportunity to professional nurses at Beaumont Hospital by delineating and recognizing the various knowledge and skill levels of nurses. Retention of professional nurses in CN I and CN II (level NN5 & NN7) care is dependent on the satisfaction they receive through responsibility, achievement, professional growth and recognition. By meeting the Professional Nurse's inherent need for growth, a high level of expertise in the delivery of nursing to patient and families may be attained.

The Professional Ladder Program (PLP) permits and encourages the NN5/NN7 level RN who is providing direct patient care as their primary role to:

1. Assume responsibility for the work to be done.
2. Set goals and propose ways to achieve them.
3. Be accountable for professional performance goal achievement.
4. Receive recognition and compensation for achievement and expertise.

GOALS:

- Recognize and retain clinical knowledge and expertise in patient care.
- Promote professional growth, development and certification.
- Encourage leadership and problem solving that positively impacts patient care.
- Support behaviors, which promote professional development of others through role modeling, mentoring and teaching, etc.
- Offer opportunities for individuals to set and meet career goals.
- Foster behaviors that promote the mission and goals of the organization.

LEVELS:

The Professional Ladder Program (PLP) has progressive levels of professional nursing practice reflective of Benner's model of skill acquisition from novice to expert. The Professional Ladder Levels III and IV define criteria required and assign point values for activities that exemplify behaviors of the professional nurse. The application process will be the responsibility of the RN.

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Levels of Career Advancement:

Clinical Nurse Level I

Graduate Nurse/Intern/RN-Beaumont Health System entry level of professional nursing practice. This nurse should function at a novice/advanced beginner level of practice, has minimal staff nurse experience, and depends heavily on rules/guidelines/and supervision. Practice focus tends to be safety, skills, tasks, and the obvious immediate needs of the patient. The goal and expectation is to satisfactorily complete State Board Exams, obtain initial RN license and successfully complete their orientation program as required.

Clinical Nurse Level II

Registered Nurse-Standard level of nursing practice and expectation at Beaumont Health System. Defined by the Professional Nurse job description and performance standards. This nurse should function at the competent level of practice as evidenced by skills in analytical thinking, problem solving, priority setting and efficiency. Discernment and integration of pertinent patient data positively impacts care decisions and long-term patient outcomes. This nurse should be able to identify own limitations and seek resources as needed.

Professional Ladder Level III

An advanced level of clinical nursing practice achieved through planned individualized programs for increasing knowledge, skills, professionalism, and clinical nursing judgment. Career advancement to this level of practice at Beaumont Health System is encouraged but requires the consistent personal commitment of the RN to attain and maintain. Consistent strong performance on all Professional Nurse performance standards is a prerequisite for advancement to Level III. This nurse should function at a proficient level of practice characterized by viewing situations as a whole, advanced clinical expertise, teaching/mentoring of peers, acquisition of nursing knowledge, and contributions to team/units.

Professional Ladder Level IV

An exemplary leader and role model within the clinical setting. Consistently demonstrates "outstanding" performance on Clinical Nurse I, II, and Professional Nurse III job requirements. This RN should exhibit a comprehensive intuitive grasp of clinical situations and is able to mobilize needed resources to achieve patient outcomes. Innovations and initiatives impact standards of care on unit and within the Division of Nursing. Requires a commitment to care of the patient, development of self/others, acquisition of advanced skills, knowledge and certification and fulfillment of unit and institutional goals.

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Levels of Career Advancement:

PROFESSIONAL LADDER CRITERIA						
	REQUIRED CLINICAL EXPERIENCE	MINIMUM TIME IN LEVEL *prior to advancement	FT OR PT	EDUCATION	DISCIPLINARY ACTION	REVIEWED BY
CN I GN/RN	None	2 Years	FT or PT	ADN Diploma BSN	N/A	Admin Manager or Administrative Nurse Manger
CN II Registered Nurse	Varies	1 year	FT or PT	ADN Diploma BSN	N/A	Administrative Nurse Manger
Professional Ladder LEVEL III	3 years in current specialty as an RN	2 years	FT or PT	ADN Diploma BSN	No active corrective action	Professional Ladder Council
Professional Ladder LEVEL IV	5 years		FT or PT	BSN	No active corrective action	Professional Ladder Council

* A PL III must maintain PL III status for 2 years before progressing to PL IV.

** To maintain PL III or PL IV would require a new application to be submitted for review every year (12 months).

*** Must be functioning as staff nurse providing direct patient care as your primary role.

STRUCTURE:

- Maintenance and periodic review of the Professional Ladder Program is the responsibility of the Professional Ladder Council.
- Professional Ladder Council will review applications and approve advancement.
- Review of packets in meetings of the Professional Ladder Council is required to establish consistency.
- All members of Professional Ladder Council will be made aware of the confidential nature of reviewed applications.

Professional Ladder Council Membership

Nurse Executive Representative(s)

CNS/Ed Specialist from each hospital

Ad hoc members may be invited to review meeting for educational purposes

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APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS:

1. The RN is expected to advance to Clinical Nurse II status after two years in the clinical area, obtaining Michigan licensure and meeting job description standards. No application process is necessary.
2. Before applying to PL Level III an RN must have a minimum of 1 year in CNII level, 3 years clinical experience in current specialty (does not have to be at Beaumont Health System) and have established a record of consistent performance at Beaumont Health System. RN may submit a Letter of Intent at the beginning of their third year of clinical experience and submit a completed application for review following the completion of their third year.
3. Before applying to PL Level IV, the RN must have 5 years of pertinent clinical experience, have been a PL III for 2 years (24 months) and have established a record of consistent performance by meeting Beaumont Health System standards. RN may begin completing packet while completing 5th year of clinical experience.
4. Administrative Manager/ Administrative Nurse Manager is encouraged to offer the Professional Ladder Program to RN's that meet performance and experience requirements.
5. The RN's intent to pursue the Professional Ladder Program must be communicated by the RN to the Administrative Manager / Administrative Nurse Manager in writing & arrange a goal setting session with their CNS/Educator, or designee to agree upon projects and points for the year (12 months) ahead.
6. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to utilize and meet requirements of the current application guidelines posted on Inside Beaumont at time of submission for Board Review.**
7. Application packet must be reviewed with CNS (Administrative Manager/ Administrative Nurse Manager if no CNS) 30 days prior to submission for completeness and accuracy.
If application is not submitted for review within 2 months of end of letter of intent year, a new letter of intent is required and the application process begins again. If RN has been on Medical leave during the Letter of Intent Year, the application time frame may be extended by the amount of the Medical leave. Work done toward for application during the leave DOES NOT count. If no extension is requested, work done during the leave may count.
8. Administrative Manager/Administrative Nurse Manager should review unit employee file for disciplinary action and the application for completeness. Applicant is not eligible if there are any disciplinary actions within past year or of that current year, or substandard job performance in annual evaluation.

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APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS: (Cont'd)

9. The applicant's completed packet should be submitted at least 14 days prior to PL Board review date to the Professional Ladder Council Representative. Professional Ladder Council review dates are accessible on Inside Beaumont.
10. The Professional Ladder Council will review the application and determine if the requirements for PL Level III or PLIV have been achieved.
11. If the application is deemed deficient by the Professional Ladder Council, areas requiring further documentation will be specified in writing to the RN. The RN must correct all specified deficiencies, (denial of application) and re-submit to council within 14 days of review to remain eligible.
12. In the event that a candidate for PL IV is deficient in points, a decision can be made by the RN to resubmit additional documentation or to have the application reviewed at the PLIII level.

APPEAL PROCESS:

1. Decisions may be contested by the RN applicant by initiating an appeal process within 14 days of the Professional Ladder Council decision.
2. To initiate the appeal process the RN submits in writing to the Administrative Manager/Administrative Nurse Manager & director or designee the reason for appeal within 14 days of the Professional Ladder Council's decision. The Administrative Manager/Administrative Nurse Manager/designate will forward the appeal to the Professional Ladder Council which will conduct a review of the application. A CNE must be present at all Appeal meetings. A response from the CNE (or representative) to the RN will be provided within 14 business days of the Council's review. The decision of the Council is final.
3. If application is denied, a new letter of intent needs to be written and a goal setting session with the manager/ CNS needs to take place. Eligibility for review will be 12 months from letter of intent.

PROFESSIONAL VERIFICATION PROCESS:

1. Applications must be submitted in a professional manner and organized according to the application. Documentation of activities is required as designated. Compiling and submitting required documentation in an organized manner is the responsibility of the RN candidate.

The committee has the right to return a disorganized application without review.

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PROFESSIONAL VERIFICATION PROCESS: (Cont'd)

2. Points are acquired by completing chosen activities detailed in the activity categories of the Professional Ladder Program. A portion of total points are required in each of the Professional, Educational and Leadership areas as specified in the chart that follows:

Required Points	Clinical	Education	Leadership	TOTAL
Level III	A minimum of 2 different activities & 25 points	A minimum of 2 different activities & 25points	A minimum of 2 activities & 20 points	70
Level IV	3 different activities & 40points	3 different activities & 40 points	3 different activities & 30 points	110

3. A minimum number of activities must also be completed and are required within each category as noted above. Documentation of activities is required as designated.
4. **Eligibility for advancement/maintenance is dependent upon meeting established criteria on an annual basis (every twelve months).**

COMPENSATION:

Upon achieving all Professional Ladder points and activity participation requirements, a lump sum bonus will be paid one time per calendar year (January – December). A maximum of one application may be submitted within a calendar year. Each year (12 months) requires a new application. This is not a recurring award to the nurse. Employee must be a permanent benefited employee in order to receive payout.

COMPENSATION DOCUMENTATION:

After the Professional Ladder Council approval is complete, the Administrative Manager/ Administrative Nurse Manager will submit the following documentation:

To Human Resources/Payroll:

- Certification Bonus Form with lump sum bonus amount indicated with Professional Ladder Level achieved.

To Employee Unit File:

- Copy of Approval/Denial Letter

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FACTORS THAT WILL PREVENT REAPPLICATION RESULTING IN A DECLINE OF (PL III AND PL IV ONLY) LEVEL:

1. A RN's Professional Ladder Level will revert to CNII level for the following reasons:
 - RN request.
 - Failure to complete clinical ladder requirements.
 - Failure to meet performance requirements.
 - Written disciplinary actions within past year in employee permanent HR file.
 - RN does not maintain FT/PT status
2. Progression to PLIV is not mandatory. Individuals may continue TO APPLY TO MAINTAIN PLIII STATUS.
3. A nurse will never decline below a CN II level if reapplication criteria are not met.

TRANSFER:

1. A Professional Ladder Level III/IV RN who chooses to transfer to different clinical area/unit and who has been on their current unit 12 months must have completed and submitted their PL packet to their current Administrative Manager/ Administrative Nurse Manager for evaluation prior to transfer.
 - The Administrative Manager/ Administrative Nurse Manager should determine if RN is eligible for application for Professional Ladder bonus.
 - The PL packet will be evaluated by the Professional Ladder Council
 - If the packet meets the requirements for Level III/IV then a full bonus will be paid.
 - If the packet does not meet the requirements for Level III/IV no bonus will be paid.
 - Bonus will be paid by the transferring RC for work accomplished during the previous months.
2. A RN with an established record of consistent performance and greater than 3 years' experience at Beaumont who transfers to another area is eligible to apply.
 - If a transfer is made to a different specialty i.e. Critical Care to Family Birth Center, RN would need to acquire 2 years in the new specialty prior to application.
 - Involuntary transfers, (i.e., those initiated by unit closure) will be evaluated on an individual basis by the representatives from the Professional Ladder Council.
3. A RN who has achieved PL III/IV in the current area of practice and chooses to transfer to a different area/unit is eligible to submit a letter of intent following six (6) months of experience in the new area if they continue to have strong consistent performance on all Professional Nurse performance standards

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RESOURCES

Benner, Patricia (1984) From Novice to Expert: Excellence and Power in Clinical Nursing Practice. Addison-Wesley.

The Advisory Board Co (2004) Fostering an Ethic of Continuous Learning: Enhancing Nurses Professional and Educational Growth.

Riley, J.K. & Rolband, D. (2009). Clinical Ladder: nurses' perceptions and satisfiers. *The Journal of Nursing Administration*. 39(4), 182-188.

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