



**Saint Francis *Care* Patient Care Services
Advancement to Clinical Excellence Program
(ACE Program)**

INTRODUCTION

Advancement to Clinical Excellence (ACE), the Clinical Advancement Program at St. Francis *Care* was designed to recognize nurses involved in direct patient care and improve promotional opportunities for those who want to remain in a bedside role. The ACE Program is designed to promote the professional development of nurses by giving them opportunities to become more involved in education, management, research or quality improvement projects which benefit patients, their home units, and the organization. The program rewards nurses based on additional role responsibilities, and can help nurses prepare for future advanced nursing roles.

Program Objectives:

1. Identify and recognize excellence in the delivery of professional nursing care; improving patient safety, clinical quality and creating a positive patient and family experience.
2. Provide an opportunity for career advancement for RNs in a direct patient care role.
3. Clearly articulate the expectations for professional practice and activity associated with progressive professional development.
4. Provide a mechanism to recognize RNs who actively participate in activities that improve patient care and the work environment
5. Recognize RNs who continue their professional development through education.
6. Promote RN job satisfaction and enhance the retention of professional nurses.
7. Support a system of compensation commensurate with achievement and contribution.

Philosophy:

The philosophy of the ACE Program is derived from the nursing vision for St. Francis Patient Care Services. *We believe that the ACE Program recognizes the role of the professional nurse in providing clinical expertise at each practice level through knowledge and experience. We believe that a clinical advancement program acknowledges the nurse's contribution to continuous quality improvement for better patient outcomes and an enhanced patient experience. We believe that a program that promotes and recognizes the professional development of nurses enhances their ability to advocate, influence and lead on behalf of patients, the organization and the profession.*

Nursing Mission Statement:

Saint Francis Hospital nurses will create the “best care for a lifetime” by contributing to an excellent patient experience through scholarly scientific inquiry, compassion for the human spirit and mind, advocacy for the patient and families and collaboration with all those who touch our patient.

Nursing Vision Statement:

Nurses at Saint Francis will coordinate patient-centered, evidence-based, interdisciplinary care to all patients and families in a safe environment while supporting creativity, risk-taking and professional growth and development. Nurses at Saint Francis will be influential in contributing to positive patient outcomes.



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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for the ACE Program is derived from two models. First, is a developmental model based on Patricia Benner's "From Novice to Expert" (Benner, 1984) applies the Dreyfuss Model of Skill Acquisition and Development to the practice of nursing. The Dreyfuss Model, according to Benner, identifies five levels of proficiency through which a student progresses: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. The Dreyfuss model is applied to nursing by Benner to describe the progression in critical thinking and behavior from novice to expert clinician. This progression provides the basis for levels in the ACE Program.

The second component to the conceptual framework is the AACN Synergy Model. The Synergy Model recognizes the combined actions of both the patient and the nurse in achievement of patient outcomes. The Model describes eight characteristics or competencies of the nurse as he or she interacts with the patient to achieve synergy for optimal patient outcomes. These competencies develop through skill acquisition, knowledge development and clinical experience. The model describes the qualitative differences in practice as the nurse develops professionally.

The St. Francis ACE Program combines both models to articulate and recognize the developmental progression of professional nursing practice, nurse characteristics and professional activity that lead to excellence in care and outcomes.

The ACE Program is a voluntary promotional system for registered nurses who deliver patient care. The program consists of four levels of professional practice. Each of the levels reflects incremental stages of achievement in professional development, education/clinical practice, leadership, community service and customer service as represented in the core values of:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Service
- Leadership
- Stewardship



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LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

LEVEL 1:

The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 1 is a safe and effective RN who is new to the RN role at St. Francis and/or to a patient care specialty. At this level, the RN will:

- Successfully complete the Graduate Nurse Residency Program and/or orientation.
- Provide care for an assigned group of patients
- Provide nursing care according to established standards of practice.
- Prepare and administer medications according to policy.
- With support from a mentor, use the nursing process to assess needs, identify nursing diagnoses and anticipated outcomes, plan care, implement the plan, and evaluate the patient's responses and progress towards goals.
- Collaborate with colleagues, physicians, members of the healthcare team, and the patient and family to ensure safe and effective care delivery.
- Manage basic unanticipated events.
- Continue to develop skills in time management, prioritization, organization and delegation.

LEVEL 2:

The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 2 is a competent nurse who has typically completed orientation or residency program in the same clinical setting. In this role, the RN is able to:

- Provide clinically appropriate care following established protocols for an assigned group of patients.
- Begin to recognize long-range goals and more readily recognize patterns of clinical information.
- Manage some degree of uncertainty but may still need assistance with complex, vulnerable patients and situations.
- Formulate a plan of care using the nursing process, which helps to increase efficiency and organization.
- Identify opportunities for continued professional development that correspond with career goals. Choose to remain at this level or seek advancement in the ACE Program.



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LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS (cont'd)

LEVEL 3:

The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 3 is a proficient nurse who has typically been practicing 5-7 years and at least 2 years in the clinical/like specialty. In this role, the RN is able to:

Efficiently and skillfully care for patients and families with increased complexity and less predictability.

Recognize the most salient aspects of a clinical situation and see the big picture.

Be more flexible and can manage a patient care assignment while supporting peers, graduate nurses and students on the unit.

Interact effectively with other disciplines and is recognized as a role model, clinical resource and leader who demonstrates commitment to achieving unit and organizational goals as well as personal professional development.

LEVEL 4:

The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 4 is an expert who:

Has typically been practicing for greater than 7 years and has at least 5 years in the clinical/like specialty.

Possesses a solid technical foundation and critical thinking skills to adapt to the unique condition of each patient.

Arrived at this level through years of experience accompanied by reflection and refinement of her/his own nursing practice.

Has an intuitive grasp of the clinical picture and acts accordingly.

Is self-directed, seeking out his/her own learning experiences.

Is able to direct, support and influence nursing practice in the organization and play an active role in achieving organization goals.



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REQUIREMENTS

All requirements must be met prior to application

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Current RN License in the State of Connecticut	Current RN License in the State of Connecticut	Current RN License in the State of Connecticut	Current RN License in the State of Connecticut
New to the RN role at St. Francis and/or to a patient care specialty	Completion of orientation or residency program	Typically 5-7 years experience as an RN or greater and at least two years in area of clinical/like specialty	Typically at least 7 years experience as an RN or greater and at least five years in area of clinical/like specialty
Time limited to 1 year maximum	Meets unit specific requirements	Has met all criteria for Level 2	Has met all criteria for Level 3
	Achieves acceptable standards in employee performance evaluation for Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes application for Level 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes application for Level 4 •
		BSN (or MSN) <u>OR</u> Specialty certification by a national nursing professional organization	BSN (or MSN) <u>AND</u> Specialty certification by a national nursing professional organization



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Application Process for Advancement to Staff RN Level 3 and 4

1. Applicant obtains an application form from the Nurses Web page – ACE Program... The applicant completes Section I and submits it to Nurse Manager.
2. Nurse Manager reviews requirements, accomplishments and readiness with applicant for level of advancement applicant is applying. If applicant qualifies, Nurse Manager completes Section II of application form and returns the form to the applicant.
3. The applicant gathers the required information (see Application Checklist) for review with the Nurse Manager and Mentor in a portfolio.
4. Prior to submission to the Advancement Committee, Manager and Mentor:
 - a. Review the portfolio for completeness and provide feedback to applicant.
 - b. Sign at the bottom of the Application Checklist indicating their review of the portfolio
5. The applicant submits two complete portfolios to the Dawn Litvinchyk, Administrative Assistant: Center for Nursing Education & Practice Innovation (ext 45109) by submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted. For those staff who are advanced, one portfolio copy will be returned to the candidate. The second copy will be retained in CNEPI for reference for other applicants seeking advancement.
6. The Clinical Advancement Review Committee:
 - a.) Reviews the completed portfolios
 - b.) Schedules an Interview with Level 4 candidates.
 - c.) Makes recommendations regarding advancement to the Chief Nursing Officer for final approval.
 - d.) If advancement is not approved, the portfolio will be returned to the applicant for further development, with notification to the Nurse Manager.
7. Advancing applicants will be notified by the Chief Nursing Officer.



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LEVELS	Points to achieve	Points to maintain	Experience required
<p>LEVEL 1: The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 1 is a safe and effective RN who is new to the RN role at St. Francis and/or to a patient care specialty. At this level, the RN will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully complete the Graduate Nurse Residency Program and/or orientation. • Provide care for an assigned group of patients • Provide nursing care according to established standards of practice. • Prepare and administer medications according to policy. • With support from a mentor, use the nursing process to assess needs, identify nursing diagnoses and anticipated outcomes, plan care, implement the plan, and evaluate the patient's responses and progress towards goals. • Collaborate with colleagues, physicians, members of the healthcare team, and the patient and family to ensure safe and effective care delivery. • Manage basic unanticipated events. • Continue to develop skills in time management, prioritization, organization and delegation. 	N/A	N/A	N/A
<p>LEVEL 2: The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 2 is a competent nurse who has typically completed orientation or residency program in the same clinical setting. In this role, the RN is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clinically appropriate care following established protocols for an assigned group of patients. • Begin to recognize long-range goals and more readily recognize patterns of clinical information. • Manage some degree of uncertainty but may still need assistance with complex, vulnerable patients and situations. • Formulate a plan of care using the nursing process, which helps to increase efficiency and organization. • Identify opportunities for continued professional development that correspond with career goals. • Choose to remain at this level or seek advancement in the ACE Program. 	N/A	N/A	completion of orientation or residency program
<p>LEVEL 3: The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 3 is a proficient nurse who has typically been practicing 5-7 years and at least 2 years in the clinical/like specialty. In this role, the RN is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiently and skillfully care for patients and families with increased complexity and less predictability. • Recognize the most salient aspects of a clinical situation and see the big picture. • Be more flexible and can manage a patient care assignment while supporting peers, graduate nurses and students on the unit. • Interact effectively with other disciplines and is recognized as a role model, clinical resource and leader who demonstrates commitment to achieving unit and organizational goals as well as personal professional development. 	20	20	Typically 5-7 years
<p>LEVEL 4: The Registered Nurse (RN), Level 4 is an expert who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has typically been practicing for greater than 7 years and has at least 5 years in the clinical/like specialty. • Possesses a solid technical foundation and critical thinking skills to adapt to the unique condition of each patient. • Arrived at this level through years of experience accompanied by reflection and refinement of her/his own nursing practice. • Has an intuitive grasp of the clinical picture and acts accordingly. • Is self-directed, seeking out his/her own learning experiences. • Is able to direct, support and influence nursing practice in the organization and play an active role in achieving organization goals. 	25	25	Typically >7 years