Clinical Ladder Registered Nurse Application

Level IV and Level V only
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Dear Applicant,

We are pleased you have chosen to participate in the Clinical Ladder program. This Clinical Ladder Program Application Guideline is designed to assist you in understanding what opportunities for advancement are available, provide information about how the Clinical Ladder Program is structured and the process for participation in the program.

In addition to this guideline, please obtain a separate Application Checklist specific to the Level (IV or V) that you are applying for.

You are strongly encouraged to select a mentor from the approved Mentor list. A Clinical Ladder nurse will help you with the development of your application material and best enable you to succeed in the application process.

Examples of previously successful Clinical Ladder portfolios are available to view prior to submitting your application. Please ask your mentor for more information.

When your application portfolio is completed, it will be submitted for review by the Clinical Ladder Committee.

The Clinical Ladder Committee meets the first Thursday of every odd month. Your application portfolio should be received one month before the next scheduled meeting to ensure that it will be added to the agenda. You will be notified of the results after the review process has been completed.

It is our desire to assist all nurses to achieve their career goals. We would like to take this opportunity to commend you in your decision to enhance your professional development and wish you success as you participate in the Clinical Ladder Program.

Sincerely,

The Clinical Ladder Committee
Clinical Ladder Application Guideline

INTRODUCTION

The Clinical Ladder Program is a structured system that provides nurses with career advancement while remaining in a clinical setting providing direct patient care. It recognizes professional development and differentiates levels of nursing expertise and clinical excellence.

GOAL

To recognize registered nurses as highly skilled and compassionate healthcare professionals who positively enhance the quality of care for patients within a diverse population

MISSION

Kaiser Permanente confirms its commitment to excellence in nursing by offering recognition and career advancement to those nurses who excel in clinical practice, leadership and professionalism.

The Program provides a mechanism to help nurses advance in the achievement of their professional goals and activities, emphasizing clinical practice, quality, shared decision making, evidence-based practice and nursing research. It encourages nurses to seek professional development in their area of expertise, thereby contributing to improved quality of care, positive patient outcomes, and increased nurse satisfaction.

This Program is based on a philosophy that recognizes that nurses have a professional obligation to provide quality care to patients, their families and their communities.

OBJECTIVES

- Support and promote the mission, vision and values of Kaiser Permanente
- Create an environment that encourages high quality patient care
- Provide an opportunity to recognize and reward nurses for professional growth and development
- Provide a network of resources for clinical expertise, research/evidence-based practice, collaboration and consultation for members of the healthcare team
- Promote clinical excellence in nursing practice and patient care through support and encouragement of professional enrichment and engagement
Oversight Structure

The Clinical Ladder Program is administered by the Clinical Ladder Committee under the sponsorship of Hospital and Health Plan nursing leadership.

Clinical Ladder Committee Functions

- Establish selection criteria for each level of the Clinical Ladder
- Mentor and advise clinical ladder candidates in preparation of their application portfolios
- Review all clinical ladder applications
- Approve candidates for advancement on the clinical ladder, based on individuals meeting stated requirements
- Notify candidates and their managers of clinical ladder status
- Mentor new clinical ladder nurses
- Actively promote and encourage staff nurses to pursue clinical ladder steps

Clinical Ladder Committee Members

The Clinical Ladder Committee is comprised of equal membership from Hospital and Health Plan, which include:

- Chair – Clinical Ladder IV or V
- Clinical Ladder nurses
- Nurse managers
- Clinical Nurse Specialist/APRN

Clinical Ladder Committee Meeting Schedule

The Clinical Ladder Committee meets every other odd month. Additional meetings may be held with the agreement of a majority of members.

Terms for serving on the Clinical Ladder Committee will routinely be 2 years and may be renewed. Rotation of service will provide continuity by retaining half the members each year while the other half is serving in their first year.
# Clinical Ladder Criteria

## 32.7 Clinical Ladder Requirement Grid – Effective January 1, 2016

Staff that achieved clinical ladder III, IV or V prior to January 1, 2016 will maintain their level based on the previous Clinical Ladder Grid. If they fail to maintain their level they return to a staff nurse 2 at job rate as indicated in section 32.8 and future ladder application will be based on the 2016 requirements. During annual performance appraisal, Clinical Ladder Nurse will present a summary of the activities to his/her supervisor in support of the continuation of the Clinical Ladder Level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Experience</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Advanced Skills</th>
<th>Annual Activities to Maintain Level</th>
<th>Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level III</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Minimum 20 hours per week/0.5 FTE)</td>
<td>• Hawaii Licensure</td>
<td>• Functions independently with minimum supervision</td>
<td>• Three (3) case presentations</td>
<td>• Provide one (1) contact hour OR three (3) inservices annually</td>
<td>• Employer provides adequate time for maintenance activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• National Certification</td>
<td>• Functions as team leader, charge nurse, and preceptor as necessary</td>
<td>• One (1) in-service</td>
<td>• Demonstrated active participation in one (1) quality or UBT improvement activity</td>
<td>• Charge nurse differential is paid when assigned to charge duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Comprehensive assessment skills and application</td>
<td>• Demonstrated active participation in one (1) quality or UBT improvement activity</td>
<td>• Overall performance appraisal rating of meets or exceeds</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Assumes leadership role with documentation</td>
<td>• Maintains National Certification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Minimum 24 hours per week/0.6 FTE)</td>
<td>• Hawaii Licensure</td>
<td>• Functions independently in complex situations</td>
<td>• Three (3) projects/activities</td>
<td>• Participates in one (1) committee</td>
<td>• Employer provides adequate time for maintenance activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• National Certification</td>
<td>• Functions as team leader, charge nurse, and preceptor as necessary</td>
<td>• Committee participation</td>
<td>• Demonstrated active participation in four (4) quality or UBT improvement activities</td>
<td>• Charge nurse differential is paid when assigned to charge duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Completion of Advanced Checklist</td>
<td>• Comprehensive assessment skills and application</td>
<td>• One (1) in-service</td>
<td>• Maintains National Certification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates expertise in specialty</td>
<td>• Active participation in one (1) quality or UBT improvement activity</td>
<td>• Overall performance appraisal rating of meets or exceeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recognizes trends and synthesizes nursing practice</td>
<td>• Mentor colleague to achieve clinical ladder</td>
<td>• Participates in one (1) committee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Acts as a consultant within KPHI</td>
<td>• Participates in one (1) committee</td>
<td>• Five (5) activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintains National Certification</td>
<td>• Overall performance appraisal rating of meets or exceeds</td>
<td>• Employer provides adequate time for maintenance activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mentoring/consulting for KPHI</td>
<td>• Charge nurse differential is paid when assigned to charge duties.</td>
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## Level V

(Minimum 32 hours per week/0.8 FTE)

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<td>• Three (3) projects/activities</td>
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<td>• National Certification</td>
<td>• Functions as team leader, charge nurse, and preceptor as necessary</td>
<td>• Committee participation</td>
<td>• Demonstrated active participation in four (4) quality or UBT improvement activities</td>
<td>• Charge nurse differential is paid when assigned to charge duties.</td>
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<td>• Completion of Advanced Checklist</td>
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Getting Started

1. Review ALL of the information included in this application guideline and current bargaining contract prior to getting started. Review the Application Checklist and Point Breakdown Sheet, specific to the Level to which you are applying.

2. Arrange a meeting with your nurse manager. Discuss your plans for applying to the Clinical Ladder Program. Present a brief overview of your project and agree on a timeline for completing the application process.

3. Select a Mentor from the approved list of current clinical ladder nurses. Contact your Mentor and arrange a time to meet.

4. Write an introductory essay
   - Submit a short essay to introduce yourself
   - Discuss what the role of a clinical ladder designation means to you and your patients. Discuss how your project will make a difference in the care of your patients
   - The essay should be typed and double-spaced
   - No more than 250 words

5. Meet with your Mentor and bring a copy of your introductory essay
   The role of the mentor:
   - Discuss the application process
   - Answer questions regarding the program
   - Review your project
   - Provide guidance and support as you work on the Level requirements
   - Review progress of your work
   - Review and provide feedback prior to submitting application portfolio to Clinical Ladder Committee for approval
<table>
<thead>
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<th>TIMELINE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Obtain a Clinical Ladder Program application packet and checklist specific to the level that you are applying for. Arrange a meeting with your manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit a mentor from the approved mentor list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write an introductory essay and set up a meeting with your mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review the application packet with your mentor to ensure complete understanding of the requirements for the portfolio. Discuss the appropriateness of your project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on project and begin to build your portfolio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review the portfolio with your mentor to assure that it is an accurate reflection of your project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit completed portfolio to the Clinical Ladder Committee for review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision reached by Committee. Chairperson meets with Applicant regarding decision and provides feedback</td>
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</table>

**APPROVED**
Manager notified

**NOT APPROVED**
Applicant may request appeals process
Application Process

An eligible registered nurse may submit an application for promotion to one level of the clinical ladder at a time.

Review the clinical ladder grid to ensure completeness and that requirements for the desired level are met. Complete the application checklist and review the point breakdown sheet.

Time period for submitting the Application Portfolio is within 2 years.

A copy of your portfolio must be submitted to the Clinical Ladder committee one month prior to when the committee meets. The committee will receive the application portfolio to review on the first Thursday of every odd month.

Your portfolio is how you represent yourself to the reader. Its appearance demonstrates your dedication to professionalism. Keep the following in mind when creating your portfolio:

- Use a good quality three-ring binder, identifying your name and clinical ladder application level.
- Submitted documents must be typewritten and placed in page protectors.
- Use 12-font black lettering throughout. Times New Roman is standard lettering style for professional writing.
- Use label dividers to designate sections (Examples: Case Study 1, Case Study 2, etc). Each activity should have its own labeled divider.
- Arrange the portfolio in a way that makes it easy for you and your reviewers to read the evidence you submitted, as well as your subsequent progress and achievement.
- Provide graphs, charts or tables showing pre- and post-results after implementing your project. Provide a few pictures to explain your story (Example: applicant conducting an inservice presentation).
- Proofread your documentation. Be sure to use spell and grammar check.

The completion of the application, including providing supporting documentation, is the responsibility of the applicant. If items are missing from your portfolio, you will be notified and your application will be held pending completion.
Selection Process

After your completed portfolio is received, it will be assigned to members of the Clinical Ladder committee to review. The goal of this review is to determine how your project will influence your current clinical practice.

Review process:

1. The portfolio is independently reviewed by a minimum of 5 members. The score is obtained by completing the Point Breakdown Sheet representing each section (Examples: Case Presentation, Unit Inservice on Clinical Aspect of Care, Quality Improvement Project and Leadership). Comments from each reviewer will be written on the back of the sheet to allow for feedback.

2. Committee members are allowed one to two months to complete the review.

3. The Chairperson meets with the applicant to discuss the outcomes and provides feedback regarding the review.

4. If the application portfolio is approved (90 points or higher is a passing score), your manager will be notified and a the Clinical Ladder Committee will present you with a Certificate of Recognition. Your manager will be responsible for facilitating your job title change and complete the process for financial compensation.

If your portfolio is not approved, the committee chairperson will notify you and provide feedback. If desired, you can request the appeals process.
Appeals Process

An applicant who is denied the Clinical Ladder designation may appeal the decision. The appeals process allows an applicant the opportunity to correct any deficiencies outlined in the Point Breakdown Sheet.

Note: Applicants are not eligible for appeal if any of the required criteria is missing or incomplete in their portfolios.

Directions:

1) Applicant will consider the feedback comments/recommendations and complete necessary changes to his/her portfolio.

2) Applicant will resubmit the portfolio to the Clinical Ladder Committee. Re-submission should include the Point Breakdown Sheet and feedback comments.

3) The Clinical Ladder Committee will review the resubmitted portfolio and review the supporting evidence and either accept or deny the appeal. If denied, the Committee will explain the reasons in writing.
Maintenance of Clinical Ladder Level

Clinical Ladder nurses will maintain their levels by providing documented evidence of required annual activities during their annual performance evaluations. Refer to the clinical ladder grid or bargaining contract for information regarding requirements.

A Maintenance Checklist is required. The checklist is utilized to document specific events or activities that demonstrate ongoing clinical nursing practice and leadership skills that meet required criteria for a specific level.

Additional supporting documentation must be included to demonstrate completion of required criteria. This may include:

- Verification of participation in a committee. Examples: chairperson or manager attestation, copies of meeting minutes that show evidence of participation.
- Any materials or handouts that were developed. Include documentation that verifies participation in development.
- Documentation of educational activities provided (such as inservices). Include objectives, pre-test, post-test or other evidence of learning, and evaluation.
- Copies of quality/process improvement reports or service excellence projects.

If clinical ladder nurses have concerns about whether or not they are maintaining their clinical ladder levels, they should meet with their managers to develop an action plan to facilitate meeting the requirements for maintenance.
Closing

The Clinical Ladder Committee would like to thank you for expressing interest in the program and for taking the time to review this application guideline. It was designed to help you succeed in your professional development and career goals.

If you have any questions, comments or additional suggestions, please feel free to contact any of the committee members.