My Nursing Career Overview

UPMC has an extraordinary nursing team. UPMC nurses are an integral part of our patient and family focused environment in which nurses themselves create, design, support, and transform care. The foundation of innovation, clinical experts driving nursing practice, and evidenced-based practice is well established and recognized for our nurses.

To recognize and support the significant contributions that nurses make to our success, UPMC offers a meaningful, rewarding career track. My Nursing Career allows nurses to spend their careers at UPMC with an amazing variety of settings, specialties, and almost endless roles. UPMC nurses can grow and develop in countless directions. UPMC nurses have the ability to build their career by tailoring choices of settings and specialties, and the ability to transfer among them, to grow and build an impressive professional skill set and professional portfolio, as well as experiences within one system. Nurses can begin a career with us in one area and then choose to reach out to many specialties, changing direction as interests develop and careers grow. Importantly, as you grow and progress in your career with us, you will maintain your years of service throughout, as well as maintain your seniority, benefit plans, paid time off (PTO) and increased PTO accrual amounts, and retirement programs in which you participate.

The program is rooted in the sentinel research conducted by noted author, lecturer, and University of California, San Francisco, nursing professor Patricia Benner, RN, who wrote “From Novice to Expert: Excellence and Power in Clinical Nursing Practice.” My Nursing Career is designed around five levels of progressive clinical nursing practice:

**Staff Nurse**
This is an entry-level position for new graduates during their first year of practice at the bedside. It is intended to be a novice level of practice in which new graduates learn their roles and develop skills and abilities, often through the mentoring of a more experienced nurse. In order to progress to a Professional Staff Nurse, a nurse must successfully completed licensure requirements, have six months to one year of experience, and receive a satisfactory 2.0 performance appraisal on their most recent performance evaluation.

**Professional Staff Nurse**
This position is designed to recognize and reward UPMC’s skilled and knowledgeable registered nurses. Staff nurses can progress to this level with in a minimum of six months and nurses may choose to remain at this level throughout their careers. Experienced nurses joining UPMC most often enter at this level. Incremental salary increases are based on performance and experience. As their experience grows, professional staff nurses are increasingly relied upon to serve as patient care leaders and to serve as preceptors for new nurses. A bachelor’s of science degree in nursing is preferred but not required.
**Senior Professional Staff Nurse**

This position is designed for nurses who want to continue to advance their careers. As their experience and expertise grows, senior professional staff nurses are increasing relied upon to serve as unit leaders. They serve as role models for professional nursing practice by serving as recognized leaders in one or more of the following areas: clinical expert, staff or patient educator/teacher, specialized resource nurse, and/or through evidenced based practice. Incremental salary increases are based on performance and experience.

Promotion to this level requires:

- a minimum of two years of experience
- a 2.3 or above rating (three-point scale) on their most recent Professional Staff Nurse performance evaluation
- an annual performance rating of 2.0 or above to maintain the position
- a current UPMC approved Nursing certification. UPMC’s tuition assistance program supports certification. Nurses with a master’s or doctorate degree in Nursing are not required to achieve certification.
- On an annual basis, nurses in this position must identify and successfully complete a pre-approved professional contribution that supports UPMC’s nursing goals. Examples of professional contributions include a patient satisfaction improvement initiative, a work redesign project, recruitment or retention initiative, or a staff development initiative.
- A bachelor’s of science degree in nursing is preferred at this level but not required.

**Clinician/PNCC:** There are a limited number of these roles per unit at this level to which nurses apply as positions become available. Clinicians are primarily responsible for servings a leader in clinical nursing practice, identifying patient and staff focused opportunities for improvement and leading the change process. PNCC’s are primarily responsible for leading and clinically managing a caseload of patients. These positions are exempt.

These professional promotions require:

- A minimum of 3 years of experience
- A bachelor’s of science degree in nursing required. A master’s degree (MSN or CNL) is preferred
- Demonstrated performance in leadership and patient care with potential for growth
Unit Director: There are a limited number of roles at this level to which nurses can apply when available. Unit Directors are responsible for Unit operational leadership. These professional promotions require:

- Minimum of 4 years of progressive leadership experience required with relevant clinical experience preferred.
- BSN required at time of hire or transfer into position. Master’s degree in Nursing or related health care field required, either at time of hire/transfer, or must be enrolled in a program within one year of hire/transfer date and completed within three years of enrollment.
- Demonstrated performance in operational leadership or patient and staff education.

FAQ’s:

Senior Professional Staff Nurses are required to hold an approved certification in a nursing specialty. I am certified in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) and pediatric advanced life support (PALS). Do these fulfill the requirement? No. ACLS and PALS are skills certifications and do not meet the requirement of a specialty certification. Certifications must be offered by a national professional organization such as the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), require testing to obtain the certification, and require continuing education credits and/or re-testing for renewal. For a list of approved certifications, visit http://nursing.infonet.upmc.com/Certifications.htm. If your certification is not listed, e-mail nurse@upmc.edu to request a review of the certification for UPMC approval.

Why is certification required for a Senior Professional Staff Nurse? Nursing licensure is the minimum requirement to practice professional nursing. It assures the public and our patients that a nurse possesses entry level knowledge to care for them. Certification demonstrates that a nurse has mastered a body of specialized knowledge beyond the minimum requirements to practice nursing. Certification enhances professional credibility and is evidence of professional commitment. Certified nurse’s tend to be professionally connected and active with professional organizations, which helps them to remain up-to-date on patient safety issues and evidenced-based practice in their specialties.

Why is certification not required beyond the Sr. Professional Staff nurse? The Staff Nurse, Professional Staff Nurse, and Senior Professional Staff Nurse are a continuum of direct patient care positions. The nurse progresses in experience, knowledge, and responsibilities at the bedside, with certification enhancing patient care excellence in the work of the Senior Professional Staff Nurse. While it is encouraged that nurses maintain their certifications as they advance their careers, nurses moving into roles such as a Clinician, Care Coordinator, or Unit Director are more successful with a broader scope of formal education to better manage staff, units, large budgets, or groups of patients. BSN prepared nurses in these roles generally demonstrate better unit and patient care outcomes.

I am seeking certification in a nursing specialty and may apply for a Senior Professional Staff nurse position. Will UPMC still reimburse me for the cost of my certification exam even if I decide to stay at the Professional Staff Nurse level? Yes.
What if I transfer to another specialty as a Sr. Professional Staff Nurse? Will my current specialty certification “count”? The My Nursing Career program requires a UPMC approved certification. In general, you may move with your current certification supporting your continued status as a Senior Professional Staff Nurse. Of course the hope is that you will embrace your new specialty by earning your certification in the specialty when your current one is up for renewal. In some instances, units do specifically require their specialty certification such as “Stroke Certified” units. Be sure to discuss this when interviewing.

**How do I get reimbursed for my certification?** Submit a completed “Tuition Assistance Request Form” available at [http://forms.infonet.upmc.com](http://forms.infonet.upmc.com)

**Will nurses who progress to Clinician, PNCC, or Unit Director receive more vacation time than the other levels?** These positions are considered to be exempt and follow the exempt vacation schedule.

**What if I do not continue to meet the requirements of my position?** Your supervisor will work with you to help move you to the appropriate My Nursing Career level.