



Message from Shella

Associate Director for Patient Care Services

A big lesson I have learned as a nurse leader is that change is inevitable. Though we have come a long way in the last several years, we have much more work to do. As the Nurse Executive, I know that our ultimate goal is to make sure that every Veteran has a great experience, that every family member feels good about the care his or her loved one is receiving, and that our nurses who provide the care are retained because they enjoy practicing nursing at VA Salt Lake City Health Care System.

Recently, we held our annual nursing leadership planning meeting with the nurse managers and nursing service chiefs where we addressed topics

about customer service, generational differences, and ideas about possible initiatives we have identified for the next fiscal year. These topics include but are not limited to customer service, RN turnover, professional image, and continued staff empowerment through our shared governance model. These initiatives align with the national VHA Strategic Plan and you will hear more about that in coming months.

In order for us to be the best, we as nurses have to care about what affects our work environment. Change is always going to be a constant in our professional and personal lives, and I know that change begins in every department, unit, and clinic.



Shella Stovall, Associate Director, Patient Care Services photo by Mito Quinoz

Nursing is a vital and proactive part of the evolution to make healthcare the very best for the Veterans we serve. It's time to embrace change! Happy Holidays!

-Shella Stovall

We Want to Hear From You!

We encourage you to contribute to the Nightingale Newsletter. We want to hear about you, your co-workers, or your department. Tell us about an outstanding staff member, a unique experience, or whatever you want to share with your fellow nursing staff.

E-mail Ismael.Quiroz@va.gov or call ext. 4399



RN Residency Program

VA Nurses are top-notch health care providers, many of whom have an interesting backstory story that lead them to their career at VA.

Where are you from? Where did you go to school? What do you like to do on your spare time?

I was born in SLC and have lived the majority of my life here and in Grantsville. I have been married for 7 years, and my husband and I have 4 children. I went to the University Of Utah College Of Nursing for my BSN in nursing. Now that I'm finished with nursing school, I'm trying to get back to the things I enjoy, which are gardening, reading, photography, cooking and a few other things like camping and hiking.

What made you interested in nursing? What aspects of the job do you like the most?

I can't recall a specific profound experience that made me interested in nursing. It's been a career that I have always felt drawn toward. And, until I finally went to nursing school, I have always worked in some aspect of healthcare as a cna/caregiver. What I like about nursing is that it is a hands-on profession, and gives me the opportunity to work and interact with people from different backgrounds. At the end of the day, I hope that I have made a difference in someone's life, or that I have made a patient's day a little easier because I helped care for them.

What do you think about the RN Residency Program? How have things been going so far?

The RN Residency Program has been a great opportunity to learn from more experienced nurses. All of the nurses

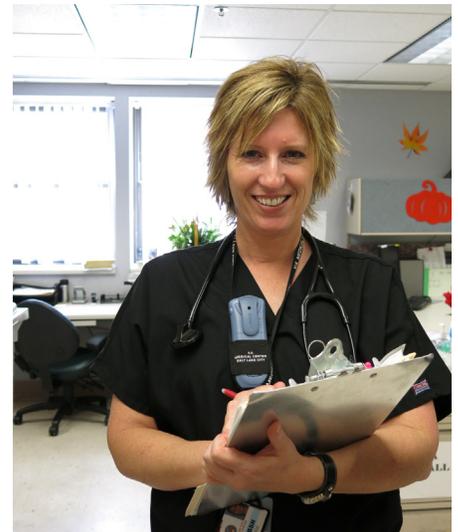
I have worked with have something different to offer, and I feel like I am getting the best mentoring and nursing experience through this program. I have felt very supported and appreciate all who are making it possible for me to succeed. So far it's it's more than I could have expected. It has allowed me to gain experience and confidence in my profession at a pace that would not have been possible otherwise.

What were your expectations of the VA before you began you residency program? Have they changed?

During nursing school, I spent the majority of my time at the VA for clinicals. It's also where I did my capstone, so I already knew what the VA had to offer before I was hired for the RN Residency Program. I really liked the fact that the VA had one particular population that they catered to, and as a student, I enjoyed the interaction with other disciplines who had the common goal of serving the Veteran's and trying to create the best possible outcome in their health. Most of my expectations going into the RN Residency Program were centered around what I already knew about the VA, and since I have been working on the floor, I haven't really changed my way of thinking in terms of what the VA does for this population.

Tell us about a unique experience you have had as an RN Resident.

Almost every patient I have worked with so far has provided me with a unique experience. The veterans we care for each bring something



Tina Howell, RN Resident photo by Milo Quiroz

different based on their own experiences and I find that most days I am learning from them. One thing that does stand out is when the RN residents helped with Operation Stand Down. This opportunity gave me a different perspective about how our vets are cared for in the community, and what I can do to help bring more awareness to the programs that are offered at the VA for those who have served our country.

What are your plans after you wrap up your RN Residency?

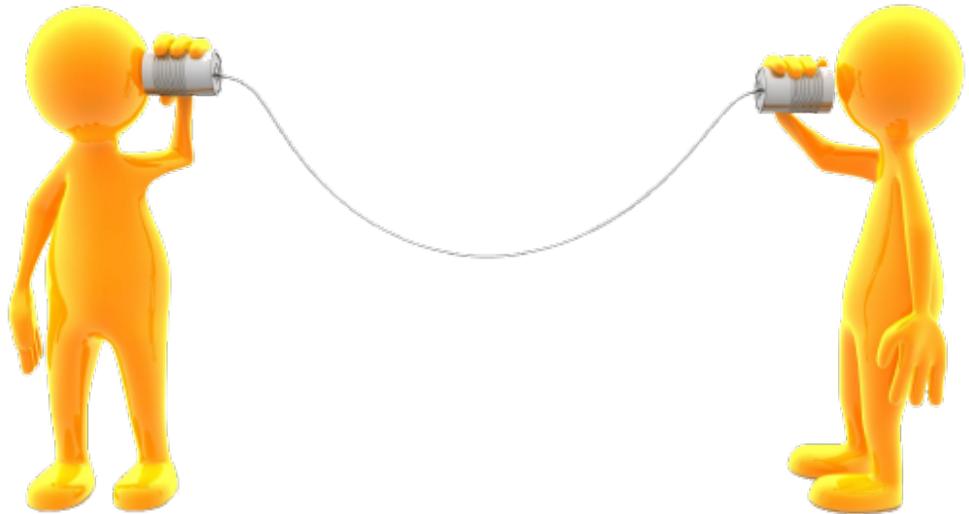
After the residency program ends, I would love to continue working for the VA as an RN. Eventually, I would like to return to school and obtain a DNP in geriatrics, or something along that line. I think the VA offers many opportunities and it is the best place to continue my career plans.

Streamline Your Communication by Milo Quiroz

There are several different ways we can communicate with fellow VASLCHCS employees. Before you send an e-mail or make a phone call ask yourself “is this the best way to communicate my message?” Here is a quick list of ways you can communicate efficiently using different modes.

E-Mail: E-mail is great if you need to send a message that requires a time stamp or entails detailed content. However, e-mail has become very cluttered and messages can sometimes be accidentally deleted or ignored. If e-mail is the best mode of communication for your message, be clear, concise, and don't send big files unless it's absolutely necessary. If you have not already, you should set up archive folders linked to your “P” drive in your Outlook account. It's not as complicated as it sounds. This will allow you to store e-mails without getting yourself in “e-mail jail”.

Communicator: If you are not familiar with Communicator, I'm about to change your world. You already have Communicator installed on your computer. Just go to your Start menu, go to programs, and launch Microsoft Office Communicator. Communicator is essentially an instant messaging program. You can instant message anyone in the VA system. This is ideal for an informal back and forth



dialogue that does not require documentation. Use this to ask someone a quick question or send a quick FYI. Give it a shot, you'll love it!

Phone Call: Phone calls are great for adding a personal touch, but they can take up a lot of time and it may not be as convenient as e-mail. The best part about e-mail is that you can respond at your convenience. Leaving a message defeats the purpose of making a call.

Interoffice Mail: Needless to say this is a very old school method of communication. Even though we have a fantastic mail crew, interoffice mail is not as fast as any digital mode of communication. Use interoffice mail as a last resort. I would strongly suggest scanning and sending documents via e-mail.

3 Awesome Outlook Tools You Should Be Using

- 1. E-mail archive folders.** Keep important e-mails neatly filed for easy access. Simply right click on an existing folder and create new folders and sub-folders.
- 2. Out Of Office Assistant.** This is easy and incredibly helpful. If you plan on being out of the office for a day or more, this tool will send a custom message to anyone who e-mails you. You can activate this tool by going to the “Tools” menu, scroll down to “Out of Office Assistant” and activate your message.
- 3. Task List.** You can make custom task lists with alerts. This is a great tool to prioritize a busy schedule. Go to “View”, scroll down to “To-Do Bar”, assure your task menus are displayed by clicking “normal”. Once you can see your task menu on the right side of your screen, enter new tasks.

Presenting Yourself Professionally

Kathleen D. Pagana, PhD, RN

Suppose you need a can of soup and stop at the grocery store to get it on your way home from work. On the shelf are two soup cans. One is dented with a torn label; the other is in perfect condition. Which one would you choose? The perfect one, of course. What if the damaged can is on sale? Most likely you'd still pick the perfect can.

It's the same with people: First impressions matter. Don't make someone question your competence by presenting yourself in an unprofessional way. This article describes how to impress people right off the bat, including how to make proper introductions and how to dress professionally.

First impressions

You've probably spent a lot of time and money on your nursing education; now you're a competent, experienced nurse. But that's not all it takes to advance your career to the next level. In the competitive work world, you need to make a positive first impression. Some people say it takes 15 seconds to make a first impression and the rest of your life to undo it. Following what etiquette experts call the "rule of 12" can ensure your first impression is a good one.

- **First 12 words:** The first 12 words you speak should be some form of thanks, praise, or a compliment (if appropriate). For instance: "It's a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for the lunch invitation."

- **First 12 steps:** Your first 12 steps should show vim, vigor, and vitality. Don't drag your feet. Walk with a

purpose.

- **First 12" from the top of your head down:** Your first 12" should reflect impeccable grooming. Is your hair wet or falling into your face? Avoid nervous and distracting gestures, such as touching your hair.

- **First 12" from the floor up:** Your first 12" from the floor up should be impeccable, too. What do your shoes look like? If they're dusty and worn-looking, they'll detract from a professional image. Your shoes should be polished. Your stockings or socks should blend with your outfit, not detract from it. Many people look at a person's shoes and make an opinion about attention to details.

Make introductions correctly

Who hasn't felt awkward during some introductions? Establishing a professional presence often begins with your introduction. Whether you're introducing yourself to someone or introducing two people to each other, make sure you do so in the correct manner. The tips below will help you understand basic guidelines so you'll feel more confident and appear professional.

- Always be ready to introduce yourself. Don't stand next to someone waiting to be introduced. Instead, extend your hand and state your name. For example: "Hello, I'm Juliana Pericci." The other person should return your greeting and introduce herself. If she doesn't, ask her, "And your name is....?"



- Follow the proper pecking order. The person of honor is mentioned first; the other person is introduced to her or him. The person of honor is the higher-ranking person. If, for instance, a new graduate is being introduced to the vice president (VP) of nursing, the VP is mentioned first and the new nurse is presented or introduced to the VP.

- Always stand when making an introduction or being introduced. If you are seated when someone approaches to greet you, make the effort to stand. This demonstrates respect.

- Make eye contact during the introduction. Don't underestimate the importance of this nonverbal gesture. When you make eye contact, you project confidence.

- Smile. This shows your interest in the other person.

- Shake hands. Use your right hand for a firm, full handshake. Avoid fingertip handshakes. Keep your right hand clean and free so you're ready to meet someone and shake hands.

Presenting Yourself Professionally - Continued

- Repeat the other person's name. This will help you remember it.

Dress professionally

Like a soup can, we're judged by our overall packaging. The more put together your appearance, the more positive the impression you make. If you're underdressed, you could embarrass yourself and your colleagues. Wearing sloppy or inappropriate attire could imply you don't place value on appearance or don't care if your appearance affects your employer's image. If you're overdressed, on the other hand, you might set the wrong tone and intimidate others. How do you determine the proper attire? Look at people in the positions you're aiming for, and dress for the role you aspire to. A nurse educator, for example, may have a different professional look than a nursing VP. If you're looking to advance your career, model your attire after those in the next level up.

If you carry a handbag or briefcase, know that these items do more than hold papers, wallets, and cell phones. They offer clues to your professionalism, success, and personality. Don't let a shabby purse or briefcase detract from your overall appearance.

Positive first impressions, proper introductions, and professional dress are vital to both your daily success and long-term achievement. Everything you say (or don't say) and everything you do (or don't do) can influence your professional image. So when it comes to your appearance, do sweat the small stuff. You'll gain a



competitive edge.

Selected references

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A keynote speaker, Kathleen D. Pagana is a professor emeritus at Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and president of Pagana Keynotes and Presentations. She is the author of The Nurse's Communication Advantage and The Nurse's Etiquette Advantage. To contact her, visit www.KathleenPagana.com.

Quick Office Tip!

Save a Couple of Trees:

Is there a point to receiving a hardcopy of your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) anymore? Did you know you can save a digital copy? You can switch to digital LES's on MyPay. Its quick, easy, and mother nature will love you for it.



VASLCHCS Entering the World of Nurse Informatics

Nursing Informatics is an up-and-coming specialty in Nursing. It integrates nursing, computer science, and information technology so that data and information can be managed and communicated to improve the nursing process and thus, patient care. VASLCHCS has hired a new informatics nurse to help streamline our systems to ensure our nurses have what they need to continue providing exceptional patient care.

A nurse informaticist is a NURSE and supports nursing work processes using technology. Nurse informaticists analyze clinical and financial data to enable cost savings and productivity goals. They work closely with nurse managers and nurses to enhance continuity of care.

The Office of Nursing Services-Informatics (ONSI) is part of the organizational structure of the Department of Veterans Affairs. One of the products of ONSI is VANOD which is the VA Nursing Outcomes Database. The goal of VANOD is to "create a national database of clinically relevant, nursing-sensitive quality indicators to identify trends and areas for improvement." At VA Salt Lake City HCS, PEV (PAID enhancement for VANOD) will be implemented by Dec 1, 2012. This is software to capture and report granular data about nurse staffing. This will help with local and national efforts for optimal nurse staffing. Another



Kathy Naifeh has been hired as VASLCHCS's informatics nurse. She received her MSN in Nursing Informatics from Vanderbilt University in August of this year. She started working at the Prescott, AZ VA in 2001 and transferred to Salt Lake City in October, 2012. Her background in nursing is in Telehealth and Med/Surg. Kathy is an US Army veteran with the 82nd Airborne Division.

software program on the horizon is AcuStaf which will be implemented next year. VA Salt Lake City HCS has been chosen as the first site visit for an informational conference in December 2012. Acustaff is a staff scheduling software that VISN 19 has purchased and will help identify holes and overstaffing in the schedule, monitor overtime, justify positions, and help with PEV data collection.

FY 2013 Annual VANOD RN Satisfaction Survey

Thank you to the 279 nurses who completed the annual RN Satisfaction Survey. This year, we had a response rate of 56.25%. This is the highest response rate we have ever achieved! In January, the results of the survey will be released. At that time, the various nursing councils will be asked to review these results and formulate action plans to address areas for improvement. If you would like to be involved in that activity, please notify your supervisor.

**Lisa Jensen, DNP, APRN
Deputy Nurse Executive**



New Travel Rules: What You Need To Know

New Federal law and national VA rules are dramatically changing our employee travel procedures, especially as they relate to attending conferences and other meetings. These new requirements are still evolving and I imagine they will change even more in the coming weeks. We will continue to refine our local processes to make this as painless as possible, while also complying with the new law and rules. In the meantime, I will attempt to explain the new processes that we will need to follow.

The bottom line is that, with the exception of local travel not requiring travel orders, all travel requires approval by the Director, or a higher level official. I have authority to approve travel to a "conference" that is fewer than 50 attendees and has a projected cost of less than \$20,000. At this point, I must personally approve travel and I cannot delegate it to others.

Attached to this message are new forms that must be completed prior to travel. I am responsible for certifying that the travel complies with all applicable statutes, regulations and national policy. Consequently travelers must provide significant justification on the forms for my review. Please allow adequate time to route requests through the Chief Financial Officer and the relevant Pentad member for concurrence before reaching me.

Any request for travel where there will be 50 or more attendees or the costs are greater than \$20,000 must be placed in the VA's "Conference Portal" and approved by the VA Under Secretary for Health. Any

travelers fitting this definition should consult with Val Martin, Chief Financial Officer for assistance in obtaining the proper approval. For those who may be planning a conference, there is a whole other set of procedures that must be followed, including mandatory training. If you are in that circumstance, please consult with Val Martin, Chief Financial Officer, for guidance.

Here are some important definitions and guiding principles:

- The definition of "conference" is very broad. In this context, it means meetings, retreats, seminars, symposiums, training sessions, advisory committee meetings, grand rounds, award ceremonies, and similar events where travel is involved.
- These rules apply irrespective of the source of funding (Appropriated, General Post, Special Funds, Research, etc.).
- Further guidance will be forthcoming on how to obtain approval for exhibiting (display booths, recruitment fairs, etc.) or participating at conferences hosted by other Federal or non-Federal entities.

- Non face-to-face learning options should be used to the maximum extent possible.

Effective immediately, any previously approved travel and all upcoming travel requests must follow the new procedures, to include resubmitting previously approved requests using the appropriate attached form, and obtaining my approval.

In addition, for any official travel that has already occurred this fiscal year, we will need travelers to complete this form in order for us to have solid documentation. Those who need to provide this documentation will be contacted directly by Mr. Martin or Fiscal Service staff.

I know that this is an onerous process and I appreciate everyone's patience as we bring ourselves into compliance with these new rules. We have a special obligation to American taxpayers to use the funds entrusted to us to best serve Veterans. These new procedures will help us to ensure that we are honoring that commitment.

Thank you. Should you have any questions, please contact Mr. Martin at extension 1213.

Steve





"As a nurse, we have the opportunity to heal the heart, mind ,soul and body of our patients, their families and ourselves. They may forget your name, but they will never forget how you made them feel!"
- Maya Angelou