



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

May 7, 2013

The Honorable (b) (6)
Special Counsel
U.S. Office of Special Counsel
1730 M Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036

In Reply Refer To:

RE: OSC File No. DI-12-1783

Dear (b) (6):

This letter responds to the Office of Special Counsel's (OSC) request that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provide additional information describing the status and details of the corrective actions recommended in the Department's report in OSC File No. D1-12-1783.

Specifically, your office requested information regarding: (1) The reassignment and/or modification of duties for (b) (6) and (b) (6) including their current position titles, scopes of practice, and duties assigned; (2) The status and findings of the clinical care review of (b) (6) and (b) (6) patient records dating back to their date of hire; (3) The status of revisions or modifications made to the Functional Statements for Nurse Practitioners (NP) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Scopes of Practice to ensure alignment with VA Handbook 5005/27, Part II, Appendix G6 policy on the basic requirements for NP qualifications; and (4) any other actions taken or planned in response to the findings and recommendations in the report. Enclosed is a Fact Sheet along with Attachments to respond to the specific issues you raised.

Should you have further questions, please know that the Clinical Executive in the Office of Nursing Services would be happy to meet to discuss the evidence in this case to help better understand the clinical issues involved.

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

Principal Deputy Under Secretary
for Health

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

FACT SHEET

For the Office of Special Counsel (OSC)

Issue 1: The reassignment and/or modification of duties for (b) (6) and (b) (6) including their current position titles, scopes of practice, and duties assigned.

Response: The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina (Charleston VAMC) took immediate action to eliminate from the Scopes of Practice for (b) (6) and (b) (6) all clinical practice elements that were inappropriate for a NP without Mental Health (MH) Certification including the prescribing of controlled and antipsychotic medications. (b) (6) is now functioning as a Family Nurse Practitioner in the Medical Service for Hepatitis B patient care delivery. Her functional statement and scope of practice are found in Attachments A and B respectively. (b) (6) is now functioning as an Adult Nurse Practitioner Case Manager in the MH Service, and is pursuing her MH certification. As a MH Case Manager, (b) (6) is responsible only for general medical practice and not related to the delivery of MH specialty care. (b) (6) functional statement and scope of practice are found in Attachments C and D respectively.

Issue 2: The status and findings of the clinical care review of (b) (6) and (b) (6) patient records dating back to their date of hire.

Response: The Charleston VAMC management stated their intention to conduct a 100 percent review of the patient records of (b) (6) and (b) (6) back to their date of hire. The Charleston VAMC management made the decision to conduct an intensive retrospective case review of significantly greater than 20 percent of the charts available for the two NPs from their date of hire to present. This number represents a percentage that is twice the nationally accepted quality standard of 10 percent of record reviews for all VA independent licensed providers, and therefore is considered a very appropriate percentage for this intensive care review. (b) (6), Acting Chief, Mental Health Service Line, conducted the retrospective case review for the two NPs from their date of hire to the present time. The review included more than 20 percent of their charts and a 100 percent review of their notes for the period of time the patients were treated by the NPs. (b) (6) states that this review "provides a comprehensive overview of the care provided by (b) (6) and (b) (6) throughout their time in the Mental Health Service Line." (b) (6) concluded that, in all cases, the care provided by both NPs was appropriate, safe, and evidence-based and there are no negative findings.

Issue 3: The status of revisions or modifications made to the Functional Statements for Nurse Practitioners (NP) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Scopes of

Practice to ensure alignment with VA Handbook 5005/27, Part II, Appendix G6 policy on the basic requirements for Nurse Practitioner qualifications.

Response: The Charleston VAMC management conducted a review of all APRN Scopes of Practice to ensure alignment with the NP qualification standards in VA Handbook 5005/27. As a result, functional statements for NPs at the facility have been modified to reflect the appropriate licensure, education, certification and dimensions of practice for their grade. The function statements of (b) (6) and (b) (6) reflect those changes

Issue 4: Any other actions taken or planned in response to the findings and recommendations in the report.

Response: No further actions have been taken in response to the findings and recommendations in the report.

FUNCTIONAL STATEMENT
Registered Nurse Practitioner III
Hepatitis C

Position Title: Nurse Practitioner **Series:** VN-0610
Organizational Title: Nurse Practitioner **Supervisory Level:** 0
Position Grade: Nurse III **Sensitivity Level Designation:** NACI
Organization (Service/Section): 111 (Medical Service) **FLSA:** Exempt
Duty Station: 534 **Bargaining Unit Status Code:** 1226
Functional Statement Number: 534-09364
Licensure, Certification or Registration: See Qualifications
Location of Professional Standards Board: Facility

1. QUALIFICATIONS: See VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Appendix G6.

CITIZENSHIP	APRN LICENSURE	EDUCATION	RN EXPERIENCE	OTHER
United States	Current, full, active, and unrestricted advanced practice registered nurse in any US State, Commonwealth, Territory, or the District of Columbia	MSN (NP program)	2-3years experience	Satisfactory physical examination as determined by the Employee Health Unit
		-or-		
		MSN (NP program) from Bridge Program (no BSN required)	2-3years experience	Verbal and written English language proficiency
		-or-		
		Doctoral degree in nursing or related field		Certification from the American Nurses Credentialing Center or other nationally recognized certifying body as an Adult or Family Nurse Practitioner
		-and-		
		Certified Nurse Practitioner with Prescriptive Authority	2-3years related experience	

2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

For patients who are considering or receiving treatment for Hepatitis C, for pre and post liver transplant patients, he/she is an expert clinician who prescribes and monitors treatment for

Hepatitis C and associated conditions. The nurse practitioner also prepares liver transplant evaluation packets to facilitate patient evaluation at a transplant center and follows these patients clinically when they return to Charleston. He/she is a clinical expert in these fields and is a resource to others who care for these patients.

He/she maintains a leadership role in identifying and initiating performance improvement activities which will improve care or processes for Hepatitis C patients. The Nurse III will collect relevant data, and use the group process to analyze and resolve problems and improve outcomes at the Service level or the Medical Center level. The Nurse Practitioner uses professional standards of care including JCAHO standards to evaluate the care of these patients. He/she will participate in the education of peers regarding project status and outcomes, either validating that practice are in compliance with current research or suggesting change based on current literature. He/she possesses the knowledge and skills to effectively apply all aspects of the nursing process within a collaborative, interdisciplinary practice setting.

3. FUNCTIONS:

The Nurse III Nurse Practitioner (NP), Hepatitis C Program is a direct clinical care provider who will practice at the Charleston VA Medical Center. The NP is administratively responsible to the Chief, Medical Service, and clinically accountable to the Chief, GI Attending Physician at the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC. The NP consults with supervising providers to evaluate peer review data as an assessment of progress toward program goals.

He/she conducts a thorough, individualized assessment of patients with Hepatitis C needs. Assessment data is collected in a systematic and organized fashion from the patient and/or as appropriate from family members, members of the patient's social support network, existing medical records and referring health care providers. The NP works with the patient to set mutually agreed upon goals, collects and interprets relevant data, prescribes appropriate medication, provides individualized care and evaluates the patient's progress toward goals.

The Nurse Practitioner, Nurse III collects relevant program data and uses the group process to analyze and resolve problems and improve outcomes at the service or medical center level. The Nurse Practitioner uses professional standards of care, including JCAHO standards and clinical practice guidelines/current research to evaluate the care of patients in the Hepatitis C programs. He/she participates in the education of peers regarding project status and outcomes, either validating that project are in compliance with current research or suggesting change based on current literature. He/she possesses the knowledge and skills to effectively apply all aspects of the nursing process within a collaborative, interdisciplinary practice setting. The NP initiates appropriate performance improvement activities to improve access to care or quality of care.

The Nurse Practitioner, Nurse III is a consultant/resource to others regarding care for patients with Hepatitis C. This RN is also responsible and accountable for completing all mandatory training assigned at the VA, maintaining competency in Basic Life Support and ensuring that requirements for professional licensure are current. Addition duties that reflect the educational,

experiential and competency requirements outlined in the four Dimensions of Nursing Practice may be assigned.

In addition, this NP possesses the knowledge and skills to:

- Communicate and interact appropriately and courtesy with all internal and external customers;
- Maintain confidentiality of electronic, written, and/or verbal patient/employee information;
- Demonstrate working practices that include adherence to Infection Control Standards and the safe use and operation of equipment.
- Maintain sufficient continuing education hours to maintain licensure and certification as a Nurse Practitioner.

The RN in this position is required to demonstrate working practices that include adherence to Infection Control standards, the safe use and operation of equipment, administer, monitor, document and evaluate therapeutic interventions and regimens required for patients presenting for treatment.

The incumbent must be poised and articulate in communicating with people of varied educational levels and varied ethnic backgrounds and willing to work cooperatively as a member of a team in all assignments. Makes caring for the veteran his/her priority while in the work setting and demonstrates customer service principles in all aspects of work. Self-motivated in the pursuit of meeting professional work standards. Basic Life Support (BLS) certification required.

Dimensions of Nursing Practice

This RN is also responsible and accountable for maintaining training required and may be assigned additional duties that reflect the educational, experiential and competency requirements outlined in the four (4) Dimensions of Nursing Practice with associated Elements:

- a. Practice: Practice, Ethics and Resource Utilization
- b. Professional Development: Education/Career Development and Performance
- c. Collaboration: Collaboration and Collegiality
- d. Scientific Inquiry: Quality of Care and Research

PRACTICE:

1. **PRACTICE:** Provides leadership in the application of the nursing process to patient care, organizational processes and/or systems, improving outcomes at the program or service level.
 - a. Leads and organizes delivery of care to assure continuity of care and peer accountability for practice, including access to care and discharge planning. Uses sound clinical judgment in assessing, planning, implementing, documenting and evaluating nursing care. Guides staff in the application of critical thinking and process improvement to enhance patient care.
 - b. Anticipates and recognizes patient emergencies and initiates or leads others to implement appropriate and timely actions.
 - c. Uses advanced clinical knowledge/judgment to promote staff involvement in planning, decision making and evaluating outcomes.
 - d. Functions as an expert in clinical practice and/or areas related to the assigned roles and responsibilities.
 - e. Systematically evaluates current practice and formulates outcomes for groups of patients and/or organizational processes within area of expertise.

- f. Uses professional standards of care, scientific evidence and practice to evaluate programs and service activities. .
2. **ETHICS:** Provides leadership in identifying and addressing ethical issues that impact patients and staff, including initiating and participating in ethics consultation.
- a. Practice follows the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses.
 - b. Treats all patients/families with dignity and respect. Patient and family knowledge, values, beliefs and cultural backgrounds are incorporated into the planning and delivery of care in a non-judgmental, non-discriminatory manner. Follows and promotes Patient and Family Centered Care guidelines.
 - c. Demonstrates leadership in patient advocacy and protecting the health, safety and rights of patients.
 - d. Demonstrates leadership in analyzing and addressing ethical issues that impact patients and staff. Analyzes ethical issues, applying appropriate theoretical principles and provides guidance as appropriate.
 - e. Safeguards patient privacy and maintains confidentiality of all patient information according to hospital policy and procedure. Maintains confidentiality of assigned access codes. Promotes policy and procedure related to privacy and confidentiality.
 - f. Initiates and participates in consultations to health care teams regarding ethical issues.
3. **RESOURCE UTILIZATION:** Manages program resources (financial, human, material, or informational) to facilitate safe, effective and efficient care.
- a. Analyzes resources available and identifies risk areas, including budgetary, staffing, supplies, equipment and availability or data/information. Effectively manages assigned resources and identifies creative strategies to increase efficiency within programs, the service and the medical center. Analyzes and forecasts for FTEE related to staffing.
 - b. Self-directed in collaborating with colleagues to review staffing and plan strategies together to solve issues. Analyzes staffing patterns for methods to keep overtime costs contained and abide by budgetary guidelines/allocations.
 - c. Takes a leadership role in providing input in the budgetary process at the service level. Reviews equipment needs and submits requests, providing vendor information and cost analysis. Initiates, implements and evaluates trials of equipment.
 - d. Establishes patient care priorities based on patient needs, ensuring patient care can be delivered in a safe, efficient and cost effective manner.
 - e. Ensures staff comply with hospital policy and procedure related to safe work practices and body mechanics as well as use of mechanical devices. Encourages prompt reporting of all accidents and reporting of unsafe or unhealthy environmental situations. Corrects safety hazards promptly.
 - f. Promptly reports all accidents to supervisor and notifies supervisor of unsafe or unhealthy environmental situations/conditions. Corrects safety hazards promptly. Puts broken equipment out of service immediately and follows through with hospital policy for disposition of equipment.
 - g. Conserves resources effectively by using supplies and equipment in a responsible manner. Ensures staff follows appropriate standard operating procedures related to equipment, devices, and work practices that impact or have the potential to impact the environment. Ensures staff complies with policy and procedure related

to Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) initiatives.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

1. **EDUCATION/CAREER DEVELOPMENT:** Implements an educational plan to meet changing program or service needs for self and others. Maintains knowledge of current techniques, trends and professional issues.
 - a. Actively participates in the advancement of nursing through contributions to knowledge development and education. Mentors less experienced nursing staff.
 - b. Maintains professional knowledge and skills based on currently published or communicated information, such as through professional readings and peer reviewed nursing journals and attending workshops/seminars.
 - c. Assesses educational needs to implement program or service level practice changes. Develops and implements an educational plan to meet the needs for self and other staff in a program or service.
 - d. Validates competencies and assesses the need for intervention.
 - e. Initiates and participates in orientation, unit based in-services and educational activities in a self-directed manner. Develops and presents in-services.

2. **PERFORMANCE:** Uses professional standards of care and practice to evaluate programs and/or service activities.
 - a. Actively involved in evaluating practice for a program or service, based on established professional and regulatory standards. Evaluates policy and procedure and provides feedback for suggested changes.
 - b. Recommends and implements changes at the program or service level to meet established regulatory standards.
 - c. Receptive to constructive feedback regarding own performance. Provides feedback to others regarding performance and offers guidance for correcting deficits.
 - d. Submits annual self-evaluation to supervisor in a timely manner.

COLLABORATION:

1. **COLLABORATION:** Uses the group process to identify, analyze, and resolve care problems.
 - a. Consistently demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behaviors that promote cooperation and teamwork with internal and external customers. Practices and promotes good customer service in all work activities.
 - b. Encourages and supports patients and families to participate in care and decision-making at the level of their choice. Promotes and follows Patient and Family Centered Care guidelines.
 - c. Collaborates with patients, families, health care providers, and health care leaders in policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation as well as in the delivery of care.
 - d. Initiates and leads the interdisciplinary group in critical thinking processes that lead to decision that positively impact the program, service, or medical center.
 - e. Collaborates with peers and leaders to evaluate various outcomes based on strategic priorities such as patient care, staff development, and performance standards.
 - f. Collaborates with patients, families, the interdisciplinary health care team and leadership on policy and program development, implementation and evaluation.
 - g. Takes a leadership role in working with others to resolve conflicts and assists

others in coping with stressful situations.

2. **COLLEGIALITY:** Coaches colleagues in team building. Makes sustained contributions to health care by sharing expertise within and/or outside the medical center.
 - a. Demonstrates professional behavior and good communication skills that enhance working effectively with others.
 - b. Actively participates in medical center or service level committees and councils. Establishes active relationships with others to promote positive outcomes.
 - c. Establishes active relationships with professional and/or health related groups in the community.
 - d. Makes sustained contributions to health care inside or outside the medical center as evidenced by professional presentations, publication in professional journals, academic teaching and active participation in professional organizations.
 - e. Initiates and applies a collaborative team approach in identifying, analyzing and resolving problems at the service level or medical center level.
 - f. Implements work place strategies that support the diverse needs of staff to reduce turnover and increase staff workplace satisfaction.
 - g. Serves as an expert consultant for other staff at the service or medical center level.

SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY:

1. **QUALITY OF CARE:** Initiates interdisciplinary projects to improve organizational performance.
 - a. Initiates and/or leads interdisciplinary committees, task forces and groups to improve patient care at the service or medical center level.
 - b. Develops and evaluates clinical guidelines or customer service initiatives at the unit, program, or medical center level.
 - c. Identifies opportunities for improvement and initiates the performance improvement process at the unit or service level.
 - d. Participates in performance improvement activities, demonstrating leadership in unit and service level projects.
 - e. Utilizes innovative and creative approaches for changing nursing practice at the service and medical center level, based on performance improvement findings.
2. **RESEARCH:** Collaborates with others in research activities to improve care.
 - a. Promotes and assists staff in the application of evidence-based research to current nursing practice.
 - b. Conducts or participates in research or facilitates special projects designed to validate and/or improve patient care and health care delivery.
 - c. Shares information from research findings or special projects through formal and information presentations/education.
 - d. Assists nursing staff with assessment, implementation, and evaluation of new approaches, procedures, and standards of patient care based on reliable nursing research and/or literature review.
 - e. Can readily apply high-level critical thinking skills to problem investigation and resolution.

Physical Demands

The population of male and female veterans served ranges from the adult, age 18, to the elderly adult, age 65 and over. The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is a major interdisciplinary teaching facility, serving medical, surgical, and neurological inpatients and outpatients. There is a large outpatient

psychiatric population, with admissions for medical co-morbidities. This position requires visual acuity, keen hearing, clear distinctive speech, and manual dexterity. This position requires potentially long periods of continued walking, standing, stooping, sitting, bending, pulling, and pushing. Transferring patients and objects may be required. The incumbent may be exposed to infected patients and contaminated materials and may be required to don protective clothing in isolation situations or operative/invasive procedures. The incumbent may occasionally be exposed to patients who are combative secondary to delirium, dementia, or psychiatric disorders. The incumbent must be a mature, flexible, sensible individual capable of working effectively in stressful situations, able to shift priorities based on patient needs.

2. SUPERVISORY CONTROLS:

The Nurse III Nurse Practitioner reports to the Chief, Medical Service and the supervising physicians on record.

3. CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Relationships with management, co-workers, patients and the general public are consistently courteously, respectful and cooperative in nature. Incumbent will display a cooperative attitude and will effectively work together to implement the organization's mission and goals. Incumbent will ensure productivity is maintained at the established level for the program for which he/she is responsible.

The incumbent collaborates with divergent multidisciplinary team members in a manner that enhances coordination of comprehensive patient care.

4. AGE-SPECIFIC CRITERIA:

The primary age of patients treated and cared for are normally at the geriatric level, i.e., 60 years of age or older, although occasionally there may be younger patients between the ages of 18-60 years of age that require care. The position requires the incumbent to possess or develop an understanding of the particular needs of these types of patients. Sensitivity to the special needs of all patients in respect to age, developmental requirements and culturally related factors must be consistently achieved.

5. COMPUTER SECURITY:

Protects printed and electronic files containing sensitive data in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 and other applicable laws, Federal regulations, VA statutes and policy, and VHA policy. Protects the data from unauthorized release or from loss, alteration or unauthorized deletion. Follows applicable regulations and instructions regarding access to computerized files, release of access codes, etc. Maintains confidentiality of electronic, written, and/or verbal patient/employee information.

8. SAFETY:

ENVIRONMENT OF CARE

Follows Life Safety Management (fire protection) procedures. Reports safety hazards, accidents and injuries. Reviews hazardous materials/Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) waste management. Follows Emergency Preparedness plan. Follows security policies/procedures. Complies with federal, state and local environmental and other requirements preventing pollution, minimizing waste and conserving cultural and natural resources.

INFECTION CONTROL

Demonstrates infection control practices for disease prevention (i.e., hand washing, universal precautions/isolation procedures, including TB requirement/precautions).

Nursing Review: *This functional statement is in compliance with the Nursing Qualification Standard at the Nurse III grade.*

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(b) (6) RN, MS, NEA-BC

Associate Director, Nursing and Patient Care Services

Supervisory Certification. *I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of this position and its organizational relationships, and that the position is necessary to carry out Government functions for which I am responsible. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes relating to appointment and payment of public funds, and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statutes or their implementing regulations.*

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(b) (6)

Chief, Medicine Service

Human Resources Review. *This functional statement meets the criteria outlined in Human Resources Management Letter No. 05-08-05.*

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(b) (6)

Human Resources Specialist

SCOPE OF PRACTICE STATEMENT

(b) (6) is a health care provider, authorized to practice as an Advanced Practice Nurse for the Hepatitis C Program. She is an Adult Nurse Practitioner assigned to Medical Service. As an APRN, (b) (6) will function in accordance with this written Scope of Practice with the overall responsibility for clinical practice residing with (b) (6) and (b) (6) (b) (6) MD, alternate supervising physician.

3/21/13 - 1/16/14

ROUTINE DUTIES
Collaborate with the client/family to establish physical, mental, cultural and environmental factors that facilitate or impede realistic goals and activities.
Conduct and document findings on initial, periodic, episodic, and/or annual health histories and physical examinations on patients seen in the clinical setting.
Determine potential needs for therapeutic changes, diagnostic workups or subspecialty consultation and so order.
Order and/or interpret appropriate laboratory tests, x-rays, EKG's and reports of other diagnostic studies and procedures.
Provide follow-up for evaluation of outcomes of x-rays, laboratory tests and diagnostic procedures. Detect and evaluate any significant change in patients' condition, treating as indicated with current evidence based practice.
Review medications for clinical need, simplification and possible drug-drug interactions and adjust as indicated.
Prescribe, administer and review/evaluate patient's response to pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment excluding narcotics and controlled medications.
Evaluate outpatients and manage acute and chronic illnesses according to the usual scope of care to include attention to maintenance of stable conditions, preventive health care and screening.
Formulate diagnostic plans and therapeutic regimen, including possible hospitalizations.
Managing patients who are receiving short or long term anticoagulant treatment.
Make referrals to and collaborate with home health services to provide and maintain continuity of care.
Plan, provide and evaluate care that promotes wellness and prevents disease/injury and disability.
Assist patient to maintain or improve their current state of health when disability already exists.
Assist patients to regain or improve their abilities to cope with states of health and illness.
Provide education and counseling of the patient and the patient's family in preventive care, medical conditions and the use of prescribed treatments and drugs. Maintain phone contact with patients, families and home care agencies as indicated.
EMERGENCY DUTIES
Treat respiratory distress and/or other emergent conditions in the absence of a physician or until a physician arrives.
Initiate basic life support/First Aid to the extent that training supports following current AHA guidelines. Maintain current BLS certificate.

B. General Description:

The Mental Health (MH) Outpatient Case Manager is a Nurse Practitioner in the Mental Health Service. He/she demonstrates leadership in the application of the nursing process to patient care, organizational processes and/or systems, improving outcomes at the program or service level. The focus of the individual's performance encompasses a combination of clinical, administrative, educational and research. This Nurse must demonstrate performance in leadership that is broad enough to impact more than one individual patient care area. He/she performs at a level that affects several units, service, service line or entire medical center.

The Mental Health Service Line serves veterans with varying degree of mental illness and co-morbidities requiring medical and psychiatric interventions. This Nurse III with experience and creative approaches executes position responsibilities that demonstrate leadership in delivering and improving holistic care of complex (general, geriatric and medical) patients through collaborative strategies with others.

The primary practice setting for this role is the MH outpatient setting but may cross to other areas in the Medical Center. The practice of the RN in this position is based on knowledge, experience, and research and has a direct impact on patient care and patient safety in the assigned areas.

C. Duties:

The Nurse III is responsible and accountable for the management of population groups or programs within the Mental Health Service or Medical Center to optimize patient care, patient safety and operational efficiency. He/she possesses the knowledge and skills to effectively apply all aspects of the nursing process within a collaborative, interdisciplinary practice setting to facilitate the effective care of patients. He/she is responsible for collaboration with administrative and clinical staff in actively managing and planning for actual and potential needs of patient population groups.

He/she is responsible for the development of strategies to actively manage patient care and follow up if necessary. This Case Manager will lead and organize delivery of care to assure continuity and peer accountability for practice and access to care. He/she will effectively communicate to their assigned supervising and alternate supervising physicians regarding any situation requiring implementation of Service action plans for patient and program needs. He/she will collect and analyze data related to the patient population, report findings and make recommendations for improvement.

The Nurse III is responsible for direct patient care and the facilitation of the care plan within the Mental Health outpatient setting. He/she is expected to manage patient care in an astute manner which promotes positive patient outcomes. This Nurse is expected to manage patient care by promoting positive patient outcomes including the areas of ordering and interpreting test including diagnostic studies and procedures normally performed as part of general medical care. This Case Manager will use advanced clinical knowledge/judgment to promote staff involvement in planning, decision-making and evaluating outcomes. He/she will function as an expert in clinical practice, systematically evaluating current practice and formulating appropriate outcomes for patient groups and/or organizational processes in the outpatient Mental Health setting. He/she guides, develops and supports staff from a leadership perspective and collaborates with other clinicians to plan, provide and evaluate care that promotes wellness and prevents disease/injury and disability. The Nurse III will use professional standards of care, scientific evidence and practice to evaluate programs and/or services provided within the Mental Health Service. This RN is also responsible and accountable for maintaining training requirements and may be assigned additional duties that reflect the educational, experiential and competency requirements outlined in the four (4) dimensions noted in the Clinical Nurse Path.

This nurse reports directly his/her supervising and alternative physician with review by the Nurse Manager, Savannah CBOC. This Case Manager may be required to perform duties with a broad scope of practice and leadership responsibility.

D. Physical Demands

The population of male and female veterans served ranges from the adult, age 18, to the elderly adult, age 65 and over. The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is a major interdisciplinary teaching facility, serving medical, surgical, and neurological inpatients and outpatients. There is a large outpatient psychiatric population, with admissions for medical co-morbidities. This position requires visual acuity, keen hearing, clear distinctive speech, and manual dexterity. This position requires potentially long periods of continued walking, standing, stooping, sitting, bending, pulling, and pushing. Transferring patients and objects may be required. The incumbent may be exposed to infected patients and contaminated materials and may be required to don protective clothing in isolation situations or operative/invasive procedures. The incumbent will be exposed to patients who are combative secondary to delirium, dementia, or psychiatric disorders. The incumbent must be a mature, flexible, sensible individual capable of working effectively in stressful situations, able to shift priorities based on patient needs.

E. Other Factors

The Case Manager in this position is required to maintain competencies with regards to state licensure requirements for scope and practice; current AHA guidelines; maintains current Basic Life Support and Prevention Management of Disruptive Behavior.

This position potentially requires flexibility in schedule and assignments. The incumbent must be poised and articulate in communicating with people of varied educational levels and ethnic backgrounds and willing to work cooperatively as a member of a team in all assignments. He/she makes caring for the veteran his/her priority while in the work setting and demonstrates customer service principles in all aspects of work. This Nurse III is self-motivated in the pursuit of meeting professional work standards. Basic Life Support (BLS) required.

F. Dimensions of Nursing Practice

This Nurse III is also responsible and accountable for maintaining training required and may be assigned additional duties that reflect the educational, experiential and competency requirements outlined in the four (4) Dimensions of Nursing Practice with associated Elements:

1. Practice: Practice, Ethics and Resource Utilization
2. Professional Development: Education/Career Development and Performance
3. Collaboration: Collaboration and Collegiality
4. Scientific Inquiry: Quality of Care and Research

PRACTICE:

4. **PRACTICE:** Provides leadership in the application of the nursing process to patient care, organizational processes and/or systems, improving outcomes at the program or service level.
 - a. Leads and organizes delivery of care to assure continuity of care and peer accountability for practice, including access to care and discharge planning. Uses sound clinical judgment in assessing, planning, implementing, documenting and evaluating nursing care. Guides staff in the application of critical thinking and process improvement to enhance patient care.
 - b. Anticipates and recognizes patient emergencies and initiates or leads others to implement appropriate and timely actions.

- c. Uses advanced clinical knowledge/judgment to promote staff involvement in planning, decision making and evaluating outcomes.
 - d. Functions as an expert in clinical practice and/or areas related to the assigned roles and responsibilities.
 - e. Systematically evaluates current practice and formulates outcomes for groups of patients and/or organizational processes within area of expertise.
 - f. Uses professional standards of care, scientific evidence and practice to evaluate programs and service activities. .
5. **ETHICS**: Provides leadership in identifying and addressing ethical issues that impact patients and staff, including initiating and participating in ethics consultation.
- g. Practice follows the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses.
 - h. Treats all patients/families with dignity and respect. Patient and family knowledge, values, beliefs and cultural backgrounds are incorporated into the planning and delivery of care in a non-judgmental, non-discriminatory manner. Follows and promotes Patient and Family Centered Care guidelines.
 - i. Demonstrates leadership in patient advocacy and protecting the health, safety and rights of patients.
 - j. Demonstrates leadership in analyzing and addressing ethical issues that impact patients and staff. Analyzes ethical issues, applying appropriate theoretical principles and provides guidance as appropriate.
 - k. Safeguards patient privacy and maintains confidentiality of all patient information according to hospital policy and procedure. Maintains confidentiality of assigned access codes. Promotes policy and procedure related to privacy and confidentiality.
 - l. Initiates and participates in consultations to health care teams regarding ethical issues.
6. **RESOURCE UTILIZATION**: Manages program resources (financial, human, material, or informational) to facilitate safe, effective and efficient care.
- a. Analyzes resources available and identifies risk areas, including budgetary, staffing, supplies, equipment and availability or data/information. Effectively manages assigned resources and identifies creative strategies to increase efficiency within programs, the service and the medical center. Analyzes and forecasts for FTEE related to staffing.
 - b. Self-directed in collaborating with colleagues to review staffing and plan strategies together to solve issues. Analyzes staffing patterns for methods to keep overtime costs contained and abide by budgetary guidelines/allocations.
 - c. Takes a leadership role in providing input in the budgetary process at the service level. Reviews equipment needs and submits requests, providing vendor information and cost analysis. Initiates, implements and evaluates trials of equipment.
 - d. Establishes patient care priorities based on patient needs, ensuring patient care can be delivered in a safe, efficient and cost effective manner.
 - e. Ensures staff comply with hospital policy and procedure related to safe work practices and body mechanics as well as use of mechanical devices. Encourages prompt reporting of all accidents and reporting of unsafe or unhealthy environmental situations. Corrects safety hazards promptly.
 - f. Promptly reports all accidents to supervisor and notifies supervisor of unsafe or unhealthy environmental situations/conditions. Corrects safety hazards promptly. Puts broken

- equipment out of service immediately and follows through with hospital policy for disposition of equipment.
- g. Conserves resources effectively by using supplies and equipment in a responsible manner. Ensures staff follow appropriate standard operating procedures related to equipment, devices, and work practices that impact or have the potential to impact the environment. Ensures staff comply with policy and procedure related to Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) initiatives.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

3. **EDUCATION/CAREER DEVELOPMENT:** Implements an educational plan to meet changing program or service needs for self and others. Maintains knowledge of current techniques, trends and professional issues.
- a. Actively participates in the advancement of nursing through contributions to knowledge development and education. Mentors less experienced nursing staff.
- b. Maintains professional knowledge and skills based on currently published or communicated information, such as through professional readings and peer reviewed nursing journals and attending workshops/seminars.
- c. Assesses educational needs to implement program or service level practice changes. Develops and implements an educational plan to meet the needs for self and other staff in a program or service.
- d. Validates competencies and assesses the need for intervention.
- e. Initiates and participates in orientation, unit based in-services and educational activities in a self-directed manner. Develops and presents in-services.
4. **PERFORMANCE:** Uses professional standards of care and practice to evaluate programs and/or service activities.
- a. Actively involved in evaluating practice for a program or service, based on established professional and regulatory standards. Evaluates policy and procedure and provides feedback for suggested changes.
- b. Recommends and implements changes at the program or service level to meet established regulatory standards.
- c. Receptive to constructive feedback regarding own performance. Provides feedback to others regarding performance and offers guidance for correcting deficits.
- d. Submits annual self-evaluation to supervisor in a timely manner.

COLLABORATION:

3. **COLLABORATION:** Uses the group process to identify, analyze, and resolve care problems.
- a. Consistently demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behaviors that promote cooperation and teamwork with internal and external customers. Practices and promotes good customer service in all work activities.
- b. Encourages and supports patients and families to participate in care and decision-making at the level of their choice. Promotes and follows Patient and Family Centered Care guidelines.
- c. Collaborates with patients, families, health care providers, and health care leaders in policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation as well as in the delivery of care.

- d. Initiates and leads the interdisciplinary group in critical thinking processes that lead to decision that positively impact the program, service, or medical center.
 - e. Collaborates with peers and leaders to evaluate various outcomes based on strategic priorities such as patient care, staff development, and performance standards.
 - f. Collaborates with patients, families, the interdisciplinary health care team and leadership on policy and program development, implementation and evaluation.
 - g. Takes a leadership role in working with others to resolve conflicts and assists others in coping with stressful situations.
4. **COLLEGIALITY**: Coaches colleagues in team building. Makes sustained contributions to health care by sharing expertise within and/or outside the medical center.
- a. Demonstrates professional behavior and good communication skills that enhance working effectively with others.
 - b. Actively participates in medical center or service level committees and councils. Establishes active relationships with others to promote positive outcomes.
 - c. Establishes active relationships with professional and/or health related groups in the community.
 - d. Makes sustained contributions to health care inside or outside the medical center as evidenced by professional presentations, publication in professional journals, academic teaching and active participation in professional organizations.
 - e. Initiates and applies a collaborative team approach in identifying, analyzing and resolving problems at the service level or medical center level.
 - f. Implements work place strategies that support the diverse needs of staff to reduce turnover and increase staff workplace satisfaction.
 - g. Serves as an expert consultant for other staff at the service or medical center level.

SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY:

3. **QUALITY OF CARE**: Initiates interdisciplinary projects to improve organizational performance.
- a. Initiates and/or leads interdisciplinary committees, task forces and groups to improve patient care at the service or medical center level.
 - b. Develops and evaluates clinical guidelines or customer service initiatives at the unit, program, or medical center level.
 - c. Identifies opportunities for improvement and initiates the performance improvement process at the unit or service level.
 - d. Participates in performance improvement activities, demonstrating leadership in unit and service level projects.
 - e. Utilizes innovative and creative approaches for changing nursing practice at the service and medical center level, based on performance improvement findings.
4. **RESEARCH**: Collaborates with others in research activities to improve care.
- a. Promotes and assists staff in the application of evidence-based research to current nursing practice.
 - b. Conducts or participates in research or facilitates special projects designed to validate and/or improve patient care and health care delivery.
 - c. Shares information from research findings or special projects through formal and information presentations/education.

- d. Assists nursing staff with assessment, implementation, and evaluation of new approaches, procedures, and standards of patient care based on reliable nursing research and/or literature review.
- e. Can readily apply high-level critical thinking skills to problem investigation and resolution.

G. SUPERVISORY CONTROLS:

The incumbent reports to his/her supervising and alternate physician. The RN performs duties independently. The RN's clinical work is reviewed by the assigned supervising physicians for the purpose of evaluating effectiveness.

H. CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Incumbent meets the needs of customers while supporting VA missions. Consistently communicates and treats customers (Veterans, their representatives, visitors, and all VA staff) in a courteous, tactful, and respectful manner. Incumbent provides the customer with consistent information according to established policies and procedures. Handles conflict and problems in dealing with the Veteran constructively and appropriately.

I. AGE-SPECIFIC CRITERIA:

The Nurse III RN is required to care for a population of male and female veterans ranging in age from young adult, age 18 to the elderly age 65 and over. The Mental Health Service serves veterans with varying degree of mental illness and co-morbidities requiring medical and psychiatric interventions. This Nurse III must be able to demonstrate proficiency in delivering mental health care to this patient population with general, geriatric and medical needs. He/she must also be self directed in goal setting to manage complex situations to include psychiatric emergencies.

J. COMPUTER SECURITY:

Protects printed and electronic files containing sensitive data in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 and other applicable laws, Federal regulations, VA statutes and policy, and VHA policy. Protects the data from unauthorized release or from loss, alteration, or unauthorized deletion. Follows applicable regulations and instructions regarding access to computerized files, release of access codes, etc.

Uses word processing software to execute several office automation functions such as storing and retrieving electronic documents and files; activating printers; inserting and deleting text, formatting letters, reports, and memoranda; and transmitting and receiving e-mail. Uses the Veterans Health Information and Technology Architecture (Vista) to access information in the Medical Center Computer System.

K. SAFETY:

Environment of Care Follows Life Safety Management (fire protection) procedures. Reports safety hazards, accidents and injuries. Reviews hazardous materials/Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)/ waste management. Follows Emergency Preparedness plan. Follows security policies/procedures. Complies with federal, state and local environmental and other requirements preventing pollution, minimizing waste, and conserving cultural and natural resources.

Infection Control

Demonstrates infection control practices for disease prevention (i.e. hand washing, universal precautions/isolation procedures, including TB requirement/precautions).

Nursing Review. *This functional Statement is in compliance with the Nursing Qualification Standard at the Nurse III grade.*

(b) (6) RN, MS, NEA-BC, Associate Director, Nursing and Patient Care Services

Signature

Date

Supervisory Certification. I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of this position and its organizational relationships, and that the position is necessary to carry out Government functions for which I am responsible. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes relating to appointment and payment of public funds, and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statutes or their implementing regulations.

(b) (6) MD ACOS, Mental Health Service

Signature

Date

Human Resources Review: *This Functional Statement meets the criteria in Human Resources Letter Number 05-08-05.*

(b) (6) Human Resources Specialist (Class)

Signature

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SCOPE OF PRACTICE STATEMENT

(b) (6) Adult Nurse Practitioner, is a health care provider, authorized to practice as an Advanced Practice Nurse in the Mental Health Service Line. More specifically, (b) (6) will function only as Adult Nurse Practitioner in accordance with this written Scope of Practice with the overall responsibility for clinical practice residing with (b) (6) as primary supervising physician or (b) (6) as alternate supervising physician.

ROUTINE DUTIES
Collaborate with the client/family to establish physical, mental, cultural and environmental factors that facilitate or impede realistic goals and activities.
Conduct physical exams and document findings on initial, periodic, episodic, and/or annual health histories and physical examinations on patients seen in the clinical setting with the exception of the Admission History and Physical, which will be confirmed by the supervising physician.
Determine needs for therapeutic changes, diagnostic workups or subspecialty consultation and so order.
Order and/or interpret appropriate laboratory tests, x-rays, EKG's and other diagnostic studies and procedures normally performed as part of general medical care.
Provide follow-up for evaluation of outcomes of x-rays, laboratory tests and diagnostic procedures.
Detect and evaluate any significant change in patients' condition, treating as indicated with current evidence based practice.
Review medications for clinical need, simplification and possible drug-drug interactions and adjust as indicated.
Prescribe, administer and review/evaluate patient's response to pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment regimens excluding controlled and antipsychotic medications.
Evaluate outpatients and manage acute and chronic illnesses to include attention to maintenance of stable conditions, preventive health care, clinical reminders and screening.
Formulate diagnostic plans and therapeutic regimen, including possible hospitalizations.
Make referrals to and collaborate with home health services to provide and maintain continuity of care.
Plan, provide and evaluate care that promotes wellness and prevents disease/injury and disability.
Assist patient to maintain their current state of health when disability already exists.
Assist patients to regain or improve their abilities to cope with states of health and illness.
Provide education and counseling of the patient and the patient's family in preventive care, medical conditions and the use of prescribed treatments and drugs. Maintain phone contact with patients, families and home care agencies as indicated.
Managing patients who are receiving short or long term anticoagulant treatment