

<b>Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Policy and Procedure</b>		
<b>Orientation, Training, and Competency</b>		
Effective: April 2014	Revised: August 2024	Due to Review: August 2026

**POLICY**

It is the policy of Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH) to verify that employees are competent to perform the duties required of their position. This is accomplished via the interview and candidate selection processes, initial orientation and onboarding requirements, department orientation checklists, in-service training, continuing education programs, and routine performance and competency evaluation.

**DEFINITIONS:**

Direct Care Employee: VPCH employees who, based on their job specification, routinely provide care and/or interact with hospitalized individuals.

Orientation: An introductory program and/or activities intended to guide a newly hired employee in adjusting to new surroundings, employment, policies/procedures, essential job functions, etc.

Competency: a combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills and personal attributes that constitute an employee's abilities needed to perform a task or job safely, successfully, and efficiently.

Performance Evaluation: a formal and productive process to measure an employee's work and results based on their job responsibilities and to formally document and provide employees with feedback on their job performance.

**PROCEDURE**

New Employee Hiring and Onboarding

Recruitment and selection of employees will follow State of Vermont Department of Human Resource policy and will include verification of education, experience, and training as indicated by the position requirements.

Upon hire, employees attend, and complete generalized orientation provided by the VPCH Clinical Education Department which introduces and familiarizes new staff with the following:

- The VPCH mission and organizational structure
- General safety, crisis intervention, and emergency preparedness trainings, including VPCH required certifications in Professional Assault Crisis Training (ProACT) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation/Basic Life Support (CPR/BLS) which must be maintained throughout employment.
- Applicable laws and regulations
- VPCH policy and procedure
- Human Resources (HR), benefits, time reporting, etc.

In addition to generalized hospital orientation, during the initial onboarding period, employees shall also receive orientation to their specific and essential job functions provided by their respective department including:

- Department specific and position-specific policies/requirements
- Specific areas of knowledge and skills required for the position

#### Initial Competency Assessment

New employees will satisfactorily demonstrate skills of the assigned job prior to being assigned independently to the job duties. The direct supervisor is responsible for verification of employee competency as part of the employee's initial employment and documentation of such as part of new employee orientation and, if applicable for the position, completion of a competence assessment checklist/tool will be done during departmental orientation for new staff as verification of competency.

Specific to the Nursing Department, The Director of Clinical Education or the Clinical Educator shall determine when the orientation of direct care nursing personnel is complete, and they can work independently (be placed in the count).

#### Ongoing Competency Assessment and Maintenance

VPCH leadership is responsible for identifying individuals within the organization, or external to the organization, who are qualified to perform competency assessments. Criteria for eligibility for completion of employee competencies include educational background, experience, and professional knowledge. VPCH leadership shall identify competency guidelines from appropriate professional organizations, to be used to evaluate employee competency when a suitable individual cannot be identified inside or outside the hospital to complete an employee competency.

Competence will be maintained through mandatory annual training, attendance and participation at designated in-services, and attendance at continuing education offerings, academic courses, or other training specific to departmental job requirements.

Verification of competence may be accomplished by any of the following means:

- Direct observation
- Documentation of mandatory training
- Using a written or oral examination
- Quality assurance monitors
- Skills labs
- Record review
- Peer/customer feedback
- Other processes providing information related to staff competence/performance

Ongoing performance evaluation for each employee will also be completed as required by the State of Vermont Department of Human Resources Performance Management policy. While competence and performance evaluation are not synonymous, the required skillsets and competence shall be considered when conducting performance review and plans for any needed

remediation. Additional circumstances when competency may be assessed might include when the employee requests it, or when performance patterns demonstrate an inability to perform the assigned job satisfactorily.

#### Returning from a Leave of Absence (LOA)

It is the responsibility of the direct supervisor to verify that employees returning to work after extended LOA are competent and current in the necessary skills/compliance/certifications required of their respective positions. Once a return-to-work date for an employee is established, Staffing/Supervisor shall notify the VPCH Clinical Education Department of the date the employee will return to VPCH so that they may assist the supervisor in determining any training/compliance expectations that the employee will be expected to schedule/complete. The returning employee shall have 30 calendar days to complete any additional, mandatory assignments in the Learning Management System (LMS), including read and signs, or policy and procedure updates. Returning employees will satisfactorily demonstrate skills of the assigned job prior to being assigned independently to the job duties.

Basic Life Support (BLS) must be up to date prior to engaging in independent work. This can occur either via an in-person training or the online BLS HeartCode training. If the online BLS HeartCode training is completed by the employee, they may be assigned to independent work, and must also complete the subsequent demonstration required to complete certification within 30 calendar days of their return to work, but this would not need to occur prior to independent work.

Similarly, their Professional Assault Crisis Training (ProACT) must be up to date prior to engaging in independent work. This can occur either via an in-person ProACT Refresher course, or via a review of the principles with a ProACT instructor and subsequent completion of a ProACT Refresher course within 30 calendar days.

If the employee has been away from VPCH for more than a year they will attend a full facility orientation. Employees attending orientation are responsible for completing all training and certifications associated with orientation before engaging in independent work.

Employees returning to the Hospital within 6 months or less after departure will not need to participate in general Hospital Orientation. They will need to be assessed by their department using the department orientation tool and initial competency process to determine any further training needs upon rehire.

#### Staff Development/Continuing Education

Programming for staff development to maintain and/or improve competence/clinical skills may occur at the state, organizational, departmental, or the individual level, and may be designated as mandatory or optional.

In-service programs may be based on identified training needs/requests, performance improvement targets, outcome trends, new or changing technology, new or changing therapeutic or pharmacological interventions, and areas identified for professional growth.

Employees are responsible for meeting their own continuing education needs as may be needed for re-licensure, certification, etc.


Approval to attend workshops, seminars, and academic courses to meet identified training needs as compensable time shall be given by the department director in accordance with State of Vermont policy and the Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Enforcement:

Failure to successfully or entirely complete the elements of new employee orientation, and/or meet ongoing mandatory training requirements, and/or complete training requirements delineated within an employee job specification, may result in ineligibility to perform in the position, notice of performance deficiency, unsatisfactory performance evaluation, and/or progressive discipline up to and including dismissal.

**References:**

- The Joint Commission Human Resources Elements of Participation: HR 01. 06. 01
- [Policies, Procedures, and Manuals Site \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Approved by	Signature	Date
Emily Hawes, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Mental Health	 DocuSigned by: <i>Emily Hawes</i> C50275615A62462...	8/27/2024