BYLAWS AND RULES OF THE MEDICAL STAFF
OF
VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREAMBLE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFINITION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE I. NAME</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE II. PURPOSE</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE III. MEDICAL STAFF MEMBERSHIP</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3.01 Eligibility for Membership on</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Medical Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3.02 Qualifications for Medical</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Membership and Clinical Privileges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3.03 Code of Conduct</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE IV: ORGANIZATION OF THE MEDICAL</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAFF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4.01 Leaders</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4.02 Leadership</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4.03 Clinical Services</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE V. MEDICAL STAFF COMMITTEES</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5.01 General</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5.02 Executive Committee of the</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5.03 Committees of the Medical Staff</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5.04 Committee Records and Minutes</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5.05 Establishment of Committees</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE VI. MEDICAL STAFF MEETINGS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE VII. APPOINTMENT AND ONGOING</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREDENTIALING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7.01 General Provisions</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7.02 Application Procedures</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7.03 Process and Terms of Appointment</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7.04 Credentials Evaluation and</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7.05 Local/VISN-Level Compensation</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLE VIII CLINICAL PRIVILEGES</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8.01 General Provisions</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8.02 Process and Requirements for</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting Clinical Privileges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8.03 Process and Requirement for</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting Renewal of Clinical Privileges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8.04 Processing an Increase or</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification of Privileges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 8.05 Recommendations and Approval for Initial/Renewal, Modification/Revision of Clinical Privileges 61

Section 8.06 Exceptions 65

ARTICLE IX INVESTIGATION, SUMMARY SUSPENSION AND PRIVILEGING ACTIONS 73

ARTICLE X FAIR HEARING AND APPELLATE REVIEW 77

ARTICLE XI RULES AND REGULATIONS 83

ARTICLE XII AMENDMENTS 84

ARTICLE XIII ADOPTION 84

MEDICAL STAFF RULES 85

1. GENERAL 85

2. PATIENT RIGHTS 85

3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARE 90

4. PROVIDERS’ ORDERS 101

5. ROLE OF ATTENDING STAFF 106

6. MEDICAL RECORDS 112

7. INFECTION CONTROL 120

8. CONTINUING EDUCATION 120

9. HEALTH STATUS AND IMPAIRED PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM 121

10. PEER REVIEW 122

11. PAIN MANAGEMENT 122

12. TELEMEDICINE 123

13. DISASTER MANAGEMENT 124

14. NATIONAL PROVIDER IDENTIFIER 124

15. PERFORMANCE MEASURES 124

16. VAPHS MEMORANDA (POLICIES) 124

17. REQUIREMENT FOR TIME AND ATTENDANCE 124

18. REQUIREMENTS FOR CPR CERTIFICATION (BLS AND ACLS) 125
PREAMBLE

Recognizing that the Medical Staff is responsible for the quality of care delivered by its members and accountable to the Governing Body for all aspects of that care, the Medical Staff practicing at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (hereinafter sometimes referred to as VAPHS, Facility, or Organization) hereby organizes itself for self-governance in conformity with the laws, regulations and policies governing the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the bylaws and rules hereinafter stated. These Bylaws and Rules are consistent with all laws and regulations governing the VHA, and they do not create any rights or liabilities not otherwise provided for in laws or VHA Regulations.

VAPHS serves a Veteran population of over 70,000 throughout the tristate area of western Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and counties in Maryland. The VAPHS consists of two separate geographic facilities operating under one management.

The University Drive Division, located in the Oakland section of the City of Pittsburgh, is a tertiary level medical/surgical facility with approximately 96 Acute Care beds, 44 Critical Care beds, 24 Observation beds, and 78 staffed behavioral health beds. It serves as a referral center for many specialty programs, including but not limited to liver and kidney transplant, cardiac surgery, bariatric surgery, neurosurgery, invasive cardiology, oncology, and radiation therapy, specialized services include robotics in cardiology and urology, audiology and speech pathology, dermatology, optometry/ophthalmology, arrhythmia and arthritis, diabetes management, endocrinology, gastroenterology, nephrology, pain management, inpatient mental health and primary care. Behavioral health outpatient programs include the Center for Treatment of Addictive Disorders, the Combat Stress Recovery clinic and a Neurobehavioral program. Specialized research programs include the following four National Research Centers of Excellence, Center for Health Research Equity and Promotion, Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center, Human Engineering Research Laboratories, and Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center. National Centers of Clinical Excellence include the Women Veterans Health and Renal Dialysis.

The H. John Heinz Progressive Care Division, located in O'Hara Township near the town of Aspinwall, is comprised of the Community Living Center (CLC), with approximately 180 staffed beds, comprehensive homeless program, residential rehabilitation, dental and primary care. The primary care clinics include the following clinics: Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), Podiatry, Optometry, Neurology, Polytrauma, TBI, Anti-coagulation, Psychiatry and Psychology clinics, and Post Deployment services, Clinical dietician services, Pharmacy, compensated work therapy, and Adult Day Health Care serving approximately 5,600 veterans. The CLC is supported by many specialties, including transitional care, rehabilitation, respite care, palliative/hospice care, dementia care, and speech pathology.
The VAPHS has five community-based outpatient clinics (CBOC). They are located in Belmont County, Ohio and Beaver County, Washington County, Westmoreland County, and Fayette County that provide primary care services for Veterans in their local area.

The VAPHS serves as a teaching facility through affiliations with the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and other highly respected educational institutions and actively supports Veterans Health Administration’s research and education missions.

The mission of VAPHS is to honor America’s Veterans with world-class health care, train their future providers and advance medical knowledge through research.

The shared vision is to partner with Veterans and their families to optimize their health and quality of life through integrated, innovative and compassionate care.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of these Bylaws, the following definitions shall be used:

1. **Advanced Practice Professional**: Advanced Practice Professionals are those health care professionals who are not physicians and dentists and who, most often will, function within a Scope of Practice but may practice independently on defined clinical privileges as defined in these Bylaws. Advanced Practice Professionals include: physician assistants (PA), advanced practice nurses (APRN, CRNA, and CRNP), and Clinical Pharmacy Specialists. Advanced Practice Professionals may have prescriptive authority as allowed by Federal Regulation and/or state of licensure statute and regulations, under the supervision of a credentialed and privileged Licensed Independent Practitioners (LIPs) when required. Unless privileged to do so, Advanced Practice Professionals do not have admitting authority. Advance Practice Professionals may initiate prescriptions for non-formulary drugs or prescribe controlled substances in accordance with state of licensure statutes and regulations. Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners and other health care professionals may be granted defined clinical privileges when allowed by law and the facility. The Medical Executive Board is responsible for determining the appropriate timeline for full practice authority implementation and the phasing for the clinical service areas.

   a. **Full Practice Authority Nurse Practitioners (FPANP)** are included in the term LIP or attending within these bylaws. The FPANP will function at the highest level of their training, education and experience. Although the skill set of the FPANP will overlap to a degree with that of the physicians working in the same Service Line, there will be differences based upon differences in education, training, and experience. These differences will be reflected in the privileges granted to the FPANP. These privileges will be developed by the individual service lines and subsequently approved by the Chief of Staff, Medical Executive Board, etc. per existing policies, bylaws and VHA regulations. An Administrative Nursing Review Panel appointed by the Associate Director, Patient Care Services, should review
all FPANP privilege requests for appropriateness related to training, education, and experience prior to VP approval of the privileging template.

b. FPANP are still required to meet the nursing qualification standards and have a proficiency signed by the nursing supervisor. If both supervisors are NOT nurses, the AD/PCS assigns a nurse as a co-signer. The nurse review is to assure that the nursing dimensions of practice have appropriately been addressed.

c. As with all LIPs and Advanced Practice Professionals, FPANP will be placed on an FPPE with the initiation of new privileges.

d. Each service line that utilizes FPANP should develop a process to allow for collaboration with physicians and the resulting workload attributed to the physician for productivity.

e. Full practice authority for nurse practitioners does not apply to contracted staff. Therefore, these NPs are considered dependent providers in the State of Pennsylvania and require a scope of practice to work.

f. Because Full Practice Authority is based on Federal Supremacy, the DEA is not included in that decision. Therefore, any FPANP that needs to have a DEA license must also have a collaborative agreement with the state with a licensed physician for ordering scheduled medications.

2. **Appointment**: As used in this document, the term Appointment refers to appointment to the Medical Staff. It does not refer to appointment as a VA employee but is based on having an appropriate personnel appointment action, medical specialty contract, or other authority to provide independent medical, Mid-level and/or patient care services at the facility. Both VA employees and contractors providing patient care services must receive appointments to the Medical Staff.

3. **Associated Health Professional**: As used in this document, the term “Associated Health Professional” is defined as those clinical professionals other than doctors of allopathic, dental, and osteopathic medicine. These professionals include, but are not limited to psychologists, podiatrists, optometrists, chiropractors, and FPANPs. Associated Health Professionals function under either defined clinical privileges or a defined scope of practice.

4. **Automatic Suspension of Privileges**: Suspensions that are automatically (administratively) enacted whenever the defined indication occurs which warrants a suspension of privileges, and does not require discussion or investigation of clinical care concerns, or result from concern of substandard care, professional misconduct, or professional incompetence. For example, exceeding the allowed medical record delinquency rate when such delinquency does not impact patient care or failure to maintain qualifications for appointment. Automatic administrative privilege suspension will be triggered by 10 or more unsigned or un-cosigned notes > 30 days and/or 20 or more unsigned orders > 30 days. Privileges are automatically suspended until the cause of the suspension has been addressed, such as the records are completed or the delinquency rate falls
to an acceptable level or provider returns to duty. Reactivation must be endorsed by the Medical Executive Board and discussion of reactivation should include consideration of a Focused Professional Practice Evaluation (FPPE) depending upon length of time away from practice and reason for the automatic suspension.

5. **Chief of Staff**: The Chief of Staff is the President of the medical staff and Chairperson of the Medical Executive Board and acts as full assistant to the Director in the efficient management of clinical and medical services to eligible patients, the active maintenance of a medical credentialing and privileging and/or scope of practice system for LIPs, Advanced Practice Professionals, and Associated Health Practitioners. The Chief of Staff ensures the ongoing medical education of medical staff.

6. **Clinical Privileges**: Clinical Privileges are the authority granted by the Director to a LIP to provide specific patient care services in the healthcare system. Clinical privileges are provider-specific within well-defined limits, based on the individual practitioner's professional license, education, training, experience, competence, health status, and judgment.

7. **Clinical Privileging**: Clinical privileging is the process by which a practitioner, licensed for independent practice (e.g., without supervision, direction, required sponsor, preceptor, mandatory collaboration) is permitted by law and the healthcare system to practice independently, to provide medical or other patient care services within the scope of the individual's license, based on the individual's clinical competence as determined by peer references, professional experience, competence, provider specific data, judgment, health status, education, training and licensure. Medical staff who have no direct patient contact, do not provide any inpatient or outpatient care or consultation, and have no access to patient records are exempt from clinical privileging but must be credentialed.

8. **Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC)**: A health care site (in a fixed location) that is geographically distinct or separate from the parent medical facility. A CBOC can be a site that is VA-operated and/or contracted. A CBOC must have the necessary professional medical staff, access to diagnostic testing and treatment capability, and the referral arrangements needed to ensure continuity of health care for currently and potentially eligible veteran patients. A CBOC must be operated in a manner that provides veterans with consistent, safe, high-quality health care, in accordance with VA policies and procedures

9. **Competencies**: General competencies of the Medical Staff as developed by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) include patient care; medical/clinical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal communication skills, professionalism, and systemic-based practice.
10. **Continuing Medical Education (CME):** Continuing Medical Education activities serve to maintain, develop, or increase knowledge, skills, and professional performance and relationships that a practitioner uses to provide services for patients, the public, or the profession. The content of CME is that body of knowledge and skill generally recognized and accepted by the profession as within the basic medical sciences, the discipline of clinical medicine, and the provision of health care to the public.

11. **Contract Practitioners:** Contractor or subcontractor Practitioners are subject to compliance of this facility’s Bylaws and VA policies as well as being reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank or respective state licensing board for substandard care, professional misconduct, or professional incompetence. Removal of a contract practitioner from a contract results in an automatic revocation of privileges. The Contract Provider will be afforded a limited fair hearing to determine only if the revocation of privileges was based upon substandard care, professional misconduct, or professional incompetence and reportable to the National Practitioner Data Bank (if Practitioner is a physician or dentist).

12. **Credentialing:** Credentialing involves the collection, verification and analysis of information regarding three critical parameters: current licensure; education and relevant training; and experience, ability, and current competence to perform the requested privilege(s). Verification is sought to minimize the responsibility of granting privilege(s) based on the review of fraudulent documents.

13. **Credentialing and Privileging:** Credentialing and Privileging involves a series of activities designed to verify and evaluate data relevant to a practitioner’s professional performance. These activities serve as the foundation for objective, evidence-based decisions regarding appointment to membership on the medical staff, and recommendations to grant or deny initial and renewed privileges. In the course of the credentialing and privileging process, an overview of each applicant’s licensure, education, training, current competence, and physical ability to discharge patient care responsibilities is established.

14. **Deputy Director:** The Deputy Director fulfills the responsibilities of the Director as defined in these bylaws when serving in the capacity of Acting Facility Director.

15. **Director (or Facility Director):** The Director (sometimes called Chief Executive Officer) is appointed by the Governing Body to act as its agent in the overall management of the Facility. The Director is assisted by the Chief of Staff (COS), the Deputy Director (DD), the Associate Director (AD), the Associate Director for Patient Care Services (AD-PCS), and the Medical Executive Board.

16. **Focused professional practice evaluation:** Focused professional practice evaluation is designed to monitor one or more aspects of a practitioner’s performance. A focused professional practice evaluation will be conducted on all new providers who are starting employment, when a provider requests new clinical privileges, when a provider separates from the VAPHS as a close out
evaluation, and when issues affecting the provision of safe, high quality patient care are identified.

17. **Governing Body:** The term Governing Body refers to the Under Secretary for Health, the individual to whom the Secretary for Veteran Affairs has delegated authority for administration of the Veterans Health Administration; and, for purposes of local facility management and planning, it refers to the Facility Director. The Director is responsible for the oversight and delivery of health care by all employees and specifically including the medical staff credentialed and privileged by the relevant administrative offices and facility approved processes.

18. **Licensed Independent Practitioner (LIP):** The term LIP refers to any individual permitted by law and by VAPHS to provide care and services, without direction or supervision, within the scope of the individual’s license and consistent with individually granted privileges. In this organization, this includes physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, psychologists, social workers, audiologists, speech pathologists, chiropractors, FPANPs, and LIP physical therapists. The Full Practice Authority (FPA) rule, which was passed on January 14, 2017, permits VA-appointed APRNs to practice as LIPs regardless of state licensure held and can practice/be privileged as such if approved by both the facility’s Organized Medical Staff and Governance and documented in Medical Staff Bylaws. LIP physical therapists are defined as VAPHS appointed physical therapists practicing at the full performance level with direct access licensure and meet the qualification standards for independent practice.

19. **Medical Staff:** The body of all LIPs and other Practitioners credentialed through the medical staff process that are subject to the medical staff bylaws. This body may include others, such as retired Practitioners who no longer practice in the organization but wish to continue their membership in the body. The medical staff includes both members of the organized medical staff and non-members of the organized medical staff who provide health care services.

20. **The National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB):** The NPDB is a secondary source of information that will report only those malpractice reports made in behalf of the practitioner and reportable formal disciplinary actions taken by reporting medical licensing and disciplinary boards, professional societies, and health care facilities.

21. **Nurse Executive (Associate Director, Patient Care Services):** The Nurse Executive is a registered nurse who is responsible for the full-time, direct supervision of nursing services and who meets licensing requirements as defined by Title 38. S/he is the Chairperson of the Nurse Executive Leadership Council (NELC) and acts as full assistant to the Director in the efficient management and consultation of clinical and patient care services to eligible patients, the active maintenance of a credentialing and scope of practice, and privileging system for relevant Advanced Practice Professionals and for certain allied health staff and in ensuring the ongoing education of the nursing staff.

22. **Ongoing professional practice evaluation:** Ongoing professional practice evaluation will be conducted on a 6-month basis and is designed to evaluate a
practitioner’s performance over a period of time. The process allows any potential problems with a practitioner’s performance to be identified and resolved as soon as possible, and fosters a more efficient, evidence-based privilege renewal process.

23. **Organized Medical Staff:** The body of LIPs who are collectively responsible for adopting and amending medical staff bylaws (i.e., those with voting privileges) and for overseeing the quality of care, treatment, and services provided by all individuals with clinical privileges.

24. **Outpatient Clinic:** An outpatient clinic is a healthcare site where the medical or psychiatric care is not inpatient care.

25. **Peer:** A peer is a practitioner of similar education, training, licensure, and clinical privileges or scope of practice, which is deemed capable of assessing the performance, judgment and clinical skills of another health care provider.

26. **Peer Recommendation:** Information submitted by an individual(s) in the same professional discipline as the applicant reflecting their perception of the Practitioner’s clinical practice, ability to work as part of a team, and ethical behavior or the documented peer evaluation of Practitioner-specific data collected from various sources for the purpose of evaluating current competence. Peer recommendations and reviews in the context of credentialing, privileging, and adverse actions must remain distinct and different from USC Section 5705 protected peer review recommendations and activities.

27. **Primary Source Verification:** Documentation from the original source of a specific credential that verifies the accuracy of a qualification reported by an individual health care Practitioner. This can be a letter, documented telephone contact, or secure electronic communication with the original source.

28. **Proctoring:** Proctoring is the activity by which a Practitioner is assigned to observe the practice of another Practitioner performing specified activities and to provide required reports on those observations. If the observing Practitioner is required to do more than just observe, i.e. exercise control or impart knowledge, skill, or attitude to another Practitioner to ensure appropriate, timely, and effective patient care, the action constitutes supervision. Such supervision may be a reduction of privileges.

29. **Professional Standards Board/Credentials Committee:** The Professional Standards Board/Credentials Committee, for the medical staff is known as Medical Executive Board (MEB), and may act as a Credentials Committee on credentialing and clinical privileging matters of the Medical Staff. This board also may act on matters involving Associated Health Professions and Advanced Practice Professionals such as granting prescriptive authority, scope of practice, and appointment. Some professional standards boards (e.g. Nursing, etc.) are responsible for advancement and other issues related to their respective professions.

30. **Recredentialing:** Recredentialing is an evaluation process of the professional credentials and clinical competence of the medical staff that have been granted clinical privileges. The process is conducted every two years.
31. Rules: Refers to the specific rules set forth that govern the Medical Staff of the facility. The Medical Staff shall adopt such rules as may be necessary to implement more specifically the general principles found within these Bylaws. Rules are a separate document from the bylaws. They can be reviewed and revised by the Medical Executive Board and without adoption by the medical staff as a whole. Such changes shall become effective when approved by the Director.

32. Teleconsultation: The provision of advice on a diagnosis, prognosis, and/or therapy from a licensed independent provider to another licensed independent provider using electronic communications and information technology to support the care provided when distance separates the participants, and where hand-offs on care is delivered at the site of the patient by a licensed independent health care provider.

33. Telemedicine: The provision of care by a licensed independent health care provider that directs, diagnoses, or otherwise provides clinical treatment delivered using electronic communications and information technology when distance separates the provider and the patient.

34. VA Regulations: The regulations set by Department of Veterans Affairs and made applicable to its entities in compliance with Federal laws. (Example: Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 38 7402)

35. VetPro: VetPro is an internet enabled system for the credentialing of VHA health care providers that facilitates completion of a uniform, accurate, and complete credentials file and has sharing capabilities throughout the national VA HealthCare System.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Medical Staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purposes of the Medical Staff shall be to:

1. Assure that all patients receive safe, efficient, timely, and appropriate care that is subject to continuous quality improvement practices.

2. Assure that all patients being treated for the same health problem or with the same methods/procedures receive the same level or quality of care, regardless of the practitioner, service or location of the health care system. Primary care programs will assure continuity of care and minimize institutional care.

3. Establish and assure adherence to ethical standards of professional practice and conduct, including maintenance of confidentiality of patient care.

4. Develop and adhere to facility-specific mechanisms for appointment to the Medical Staff and delineation of clinical privileges.
5. Provide educational activities that relate to: care provided, findings of quality of care review activities, advances in medical science, and expressed needs of caregivers and recipients of care.

6. Maintain a high level of professional performance of Practitioners authorized to practice in the facility through continuous quality improvement practices and appropriate delineation of clinical privileges.

7. Assist the Governing Body in developing and maintaining rules for Medical Staff governance and oversight.

8. Provide a medical perspective, as appropriate, to issues being considered by the Director and Governing Body.

9. Develop and implement performance and safety improvement activities in collaboration with the Executive Leadership Board and assume a leadership role in improving organizational performance and patient safety.

10. Provide channels of communication so that medical and administrative matters may be discussed and problems resolved including patient safety and patient satisfaction.

11. Establish organizational policy for patient care and treatment and implement professional guidelines from the Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration.

12. Provide education and training, in affiliation with established programs, and assure that educational standards are maintained. Care will be taken to appropriately document supervision of resident physicians and other trainees.

13. Cooperate with the affiliated medical school and other educational institutions for undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate and continuing education in medicine and related sciences, and encourage participation of staff members in basic clinical research.

14. Initiate and maintain an active continuous quality improvement program addressing all aspects of medical practice. Daily operations will be the subject of continuous quality improvement, as defined through organizational policies and procedures.

15. Coordinate and supervise the scope of practice of Advanced Practice Professionals and appropriate Associated Health Practitioner staff so that their rights and practice goals are achieved and integrated expeditiously to benefit the care of patients. Each Advanced Practice Professional and appropriate Associated Health Practitioner should have a scope of practice statement or privileges as well as the means employed to coordinate and supervise their function with the medical staff.

16. Serves as the primary means for accountability to the Director through the Chief of Staff for the quality of patient care, the professional performance and ethical conduct of its members and strive toward the continual upgrading of the quality of patient care delivered in the healthcare system consistent with the state of the healing arts and resources locally available.
17. Serves as a patient advocate.
18. Advises the governing body of resources needed to optimize patient care.
19. Recommend the clinical services to be provided by telemedicine.

ARTICLE III. MEDICAL STAFF MEMBERSHIP

Section 3.01 Eligibility for Membership on the Medical Staff

1. Membership: Membership on the Medical Staff is a privilege extended only to, and continued for, professionally competent physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, chiropractors, psychologists, social workers, audiologists, speech pathologists, FPANPs, and LIP physical therapists who continuously meet the qualifications, standards, and requirements of VHA, this Facility, and these Bylaws.

2. Categories of the Medical Staff:
   a. Active Medical Staff: The active Medical Staff shall consist of all full-time and part-time physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, chiropractors, psychologists, social workers, audiologists, speech pathologists, FPANPs, and LIP physical therapists who are professionally responsible for specific patient care and/or education and/or research activities in the healthcare system and who assume all the functions and responsibilities of membership on the active staff. Members of the active medical staff shall be appointed to a specific service line, shall be eligible to vote and to serve on medical staff committees and shall be required to attend medical staff meetings.

   b. Associate Medical Staff: The associate Medical Staff shall consist of physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, chiropractors, psychologists, social workers, audiologists, speech pathologists, FPANPs, and LIP physical therapists, who are on consulting, attending, on-station fee basis, contract, or without compensation appointment (WOC) and are responsible for supplementing the practice of members of the active staff in their roles in education, patient care and/or research. Consultants will be those individuals who have recognized professional ability and experience of professorial rank. Both consultants and attendings will be appointed to a specific service line. Fee basis staff, (except contract staffs that are program leaders), staff appointed WOC and consultant staff are not required to attend meetings of the medical staff. Associate Medical Staff are not eligible to vote.

3. Decisions regarding Medical Staff membership are made without discrimination for reasons such as race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, lawful partisan political affiliation, marital status, physical or mental handicap when the individual is qualified to do the work, age, membership or non-membership in a labor organization, or on the basis of any other criteria unrelated to professional qualifications.
Section 3.02 Qualifications for Medical Staff Membership and Clinical Privileges

1. Criteria for Clinical Privileges: To qualify for Medical Staff membership and clinical privileges, individuals who meet the eligibility requirements identified in Section 3.01 must submit evidence as listed below. Applicants not meeting these requirements will not be considered. This determination of ineligibility is not considered a denial:

   a. Active, current, full and unrestricted license to practice individual's profession in a state, territory or commonwealth of the United States or the District of Columbia as required by VA employment and utilization policies and procedures.

   b. Education applicable to individual Medical Staff members as defined, for example holding a Doctoral level degree in Medicine, Osteopathy, Dentistry, Optometry, Chiropracty, or Podiatry from an approved college or university. Other LIPs on the medical staff (psychologists, social workers, audiologists, speech pathologists, FPANPs, and LIP physical therapists) must meet the educational requirements as defined in VA regulations.

   c. Relevant training and/or experience consistent with the individual's professional assignment and the privileges for which he/she is applying. This may include any internship, residencies, fellowships, board certification, and other specialty training.

   d. Current competence, consistent with the individual's assignment and the privileges for which he/she is applying.

   e. Health status consistent with physical and mental capability of satisfactorily performing the duties of the Medical Staff assignment within clinical privileges granted.

   f. Complete information consistent with requirements for application and clinical privileges as defined in Articles VI or VII or of these Bylaws for a position for which the facility has a patient care need, and adequate facilities, support services and staff.

   g. Satisfactory findings relative to previous professional competence and professional conduct.

   h. English language proficiency.

   i. Current professional liability insurance as required by Federal and VA acquisition regulations for those individuals providing service under contract.

   j. A current Personal Identity Verification (PIV) Card.

2. Clinical Privileges and Scope of Practice: While only Licensed Independent Practitioners may function with defined clinical privileges, not all Licensed Independent Practitioners are permitted by this Facility and these Bylaws to practice independently. All Practitioners listed below are subject to the bylaws whether they are granted defined clinical privileges or not.
a. The following Practitioners will be credentialed and privileged to practice independently:
   i) Physicians
   ii) Dentists

b. The following Practitioners will be credentialed and may be privileged to practice independently if in possession of State license/registration that permits independent practice or authorized by VHA regulation and authorized by this Facility:
   i) Social Workers
   ii) Psychologists
   iii) Audiologists
   iv) Speech Pathologists
   v) Podiatrists
   vi) Optometrists
   vii) Chiropractors
   viii) Full Practice Authority Nurse Practitioners (FPANP)
   ix) LIP Physical Therapists (VAPHS appointed physical therapists practicing at the full performance level with direct access licensure and that meet the qualification standards for independent practice)

c. The following Practitioners will be credentialed through the Medical Staff process including recredentialing and will practice under a Scope of Practice with appropriate supervision:
   i) Physician Assistants
   ii) Advanced Practice Nurses
      1. Except FPANP
      2. Contracted APRNs who are not licensed in a state which recognizes their APRNs as Licensed Independent Practitioners
      3. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs)
   iii) Clinical Pharmacists (Pharm D)
   iv) Clinical Nutrition Specialists (Registered Dieticians)

3. **Change in Status:** Members of the Medical Staff as well as all Practitioners practicing through privileges or a scope of practice must agree to provide care to patients within the scope of their Delineated Clinical Privileges or Scope of Practice and advise the Director, through the Chief of Staff, of any change in ability to fully meet the criteria for Medical Staff membership, the ability to carry out clinical privileges which are held, and any changes in the status of professional credentials, such as, but not limited to, loss of licensure, clinical
privileges, or certification, as well as any pending or proposed action against a credential, such as, but not limited to, licensure, clinical privileges, certification, professional organization or society as soon as able, but no longer than 15 days after notification of the practitioner.

Section 3.03 Code of Conduct

1. Acceptable Behavior: The VA expects that members of the medical staff will serve diligently, loyally, and cooperatively. They must avoid misconduct and other activities that conflict with their duties; exercise courtesy and dignity; and otherwise conduct themselves, both on and off duty, in a manner that reflects positively upon themselves and VA. Acceptable behavior includes the following:
   (1) being on duty as scheduled.
   (2) being impartial in carrying out official duties and avoiding any action that might result in, or look as though, a medical staff member is giving preferential treatment to any person, group or organization.
   (3) not discriminating on the basis of race, age, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, politics, marital status, or disability in any employment matter or in providing benefits under any law administered by VA.
   (4) not making a governmental decision outside of official channels.
   (5) not taking any action that impedes government efficiency and economy, affects one’s impartiality, or otherwise lowers public confidence in the Federal Government.
   (6) with certain exceptions in accordance with 5 C.F.R. 2635, not asking for or accepting any gift, tip, entertainment, loan, or favor, or anything of monetary value for oneself or any member of one’s family from any person or organization that is seeking or has a business or financial relationship with the VA to avoid the appearance that one’s official actions might be influenced by such gifts.

2. Behaviors that undermine a culture of safety and Inappropriate Behavior: VA recognizes that the manner in which its Practitioners interact with others can significantly impact patient care. VA strongly urges its providers to fulfill their obligations to maximize the safety of patient care by behaving in a manner that promotes both professional practice and a work environment that ensures high standards of care. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education highlights the importance of interpersonal/communication skills and professionalism as two of the six core competencies required for graduation from residency. Providers should consider it their ethical duty to foster respect among all health care professionals as a means of ensuring good patient care. Conduct that could intimidate others to the extent that could affect or potentially may affect quality and safety will not be tolerated. These behaviors, as determined by the organization, may be verbal or non-verbal, may involve the use of rude and/or disrespectful language, may be threatening, or may involve physical contact.

Behaviors that undermine a culture of safety are a style of interaction with physicians, hospital personnel, patients, family members, or others that interferes with patient care. Behaviors such as foul language; rude, loud or offensive comments; and intimidation of staff, patients and family members are commonly recognized as detrimental to patient care. Furthermore, it has become apparent that behaviors that undermine a culture of safety are often a marker for concerns
that can range from a lack of interpersonal skills to deeper problems, such as depression or substance abuse. As a result, behaviors that undermine a culture of safety may reach a threshold such that it constitutes grounds for further inquiry by the Medical Executive Board into the potential underlying causes of such behavior. Behavior by a provider that is disruptive could be grounds for disciplinary action.

VA distinguishes behaviors that undermine a culture of safety from constructive criticism that is offered in a professional manner with the aim of improving patient care. VA also reminds its providers of their responsibility not only to patients, but also to themselves. Symptoms of stress, such as exhaustion and depression, can negatively affect a provider’s health and performance. Providers suffering such symptoms are encouraged to seek the support needed to help them regain their equilibrium.

Providers, in their role as patient and peer advocates, are obligated to take appropriate action when observing behaviors that undermine a culture of safety on the part of other providers. VA urges its providers to support their hospital, practice, or other healthcare organization in their efforts to identify and manage behaviors that undermine a culture of safety, by taking a role in this process when appropriate.

3. **Professional Misconduct:** Behavior by a professional that creates the appearance of a violation of ethical standards or has compromised ethical standards will not be tolerated.

**Section 3.04: Conflict Resolution & Management**

For VA to be effective and efficient in achieving its goals the organization must have clear objectives and a shared vision of what it is striving to achieve. Therefore, there must be a mechanism for the recognition of conflict and its resolution in order to make progress in meeting these established goals. Conflict management is the process of planning to avoid conflict when possible and manage to resolve such conflict quickly and efficiently when it occurs. VA Handbook 5978.1, *Alternative Dispute Resolution Program*, addresses the conflict resolution and management process available in VA, as well as resources to engage in mediation as well as non-binding, or binding arbitration. VHA expects VA medical center leadership to make use of these and other resources in communicating expectations to clinicians and other staff that conflictive, disruptive, inappropriate, intimidating, and uncivil behavior can compromise VHA’s mission of high quality health care service to Veterans. VA staff that experience or witness such behavior are encouraged to advise an appropriate supervisor, Patient Safety Officer, or other individual as described in the following Agency resources.
ARTICLE IV: ORGANIZATION OF THE MEDICAL STAFF

Section 4.01 Leaders

1. **Composition:**
   
a. Chief of Staff.

2. **Qualifications:** The Chief of Staff must be a physician who has had appropriate experience in medical practice, academic affairs, and administration. It is understood that any individual selected as Chief of Staff shall be a member of the Medical Staff and have privileges ex officio to act as a consultant in evaluating all aspects of patient care and other professional services provided by the facility.

3. **Selection:** The Organized Medical Staff does not elect medical staff officers. The Medical Staff Bylaws are approved by the organized medical staff, which constitutes the agreement of the leadership organization. The selection of a Chief of Staff begins with a Search Committee selected by the Director with the consent of the (VISN 4) Director. The Director should seek advice from the Dean of the University of Pittsburgh Medical School in selecting the Search Committee. The Search Committee shall determine a list of applicants for the position who warrant further evaluation. Each of these candidates should be interviewed by members of the Medical Executive Board and by the Search Committee. The Committee shall make recommendations to the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Director and the VISN 4 Director regarding acceptable candidates for the Chief of Staff along with an explanation of their perceived strengths and weaknesses. The VAPHS Director and VISN 4 Director then select an individual from the candidates recommended by the Search Committee. The Network Director approves recommendations to the position of Chief of Staff. The selecting organization is responsible to complete and submit information on the selectee to the Leadership Management and Succession Sub-Committee (LMSS). The LMSS support staff (Executive Recruitment Team) in the Workforce Management and Consulting Office will submit templates to the Leadership Management and Succession Sub-Committee and Workforce Committee for information only after Central Office has completed a technical review of the candidate, the VISN 4 Director then appoints the Chief of Staff on behalf of the Governing Body. The Chief of Staff may also apply for and be granted specific privileges to provide direct patient care. Tenure of the Chief of Staff is determined by the Governing Body, represented by the VISN 4 Director. Although the Chief of Staff is not an elected "officer," he/she may be removed through the processes described in MP-5 Part II, Chapters 6 (Proficiency Rating System), 8 (Disciplinary Actions), 9 (Separations), 10 (Physical Requirements), and VHA supplements hereto consistent with these bylaws. Proposed action to remove the Chief of Staff will be coordinated through the Director. All disciplinary and/or adverse actions involving a Chief of Staff position must be referred to the Office of the Accountability Review (OAR). The OAR Employee Relations division will assign an Employee Relations Specialist to work directly with the proposing and deciding officials.
4. **Duties:**
   a. Chief of Staff serves as Chairperson of the Medical Executive Board.
   b. The Chief of Staff acts as the executive officer of the Medical Staff.
   c. The Chief of Staff's office shall facilitate effective communication between the Medical Staff and the Director using written documents and appropriate meetings.
   d. The Chief of Staff will represent the Medical Staff at regularly scheduled hospital administrative meetings and shall assure that the Medical Staff is appropriately represented in any hospital deliberation affecting the discharge of Medical staff responsibilities.
   e. The Chief of Staff will also act as the main representative of the Medical Staff with respect to physician trainee issues.

5. **Grounds for Removal:** Ground for removal of the Chief of Staff or Members of the Medical Staff include, but are not limited to:
   a. Failure to perform the duties of the position in a timely and appropriate manner;
   b. Failure to satisfy continuously or significantly the justifications of the position;
   c. Conviction of a felony;
   d. Loss of professional licensure.

### Section 4.02 Leadership

The Organized Medical Staff, through its committees and Service Line Vice Presidents, provides counsel and assistance to the Chief of Staff and Director regarding all facets of patient care, treatment, and services including evaluating and improving the quality and safety of patient care services, performance improvement, goals, plans, education, research, mission, and services offered and assists with prioritization of hospital sponsored continuing education. All active Medical Staff members are eligible for membership on the Medical Executive Board.

### Section 4.03 Clinical Services

1. **Characteristics:**
   a. Clinical Services are organized to provide clinical care, research, teaching and treatment under leadership of a Vice President through the following Service Lines.
   b. The following Service Lines provide patient care, research and teaching activities at this healthcare system under the leadership of the Service Line Vice President:
      i) **Primary Care Service Line:**
Primary Care Clinics  
Community Based Outpatient Clinics  
Women's Health Program  
OEF/OIF Clinic  

ii) Behavioral Health Service Line:  
Behavioral Health Clinics  
Center for Treatment of Addictive Disorders  
Patient Evaluation & Referral Center  
Psychiatric Consults  
Neuropsychiatry  
TBI  
Hospital Based Care  
Specialty Outpatient Services  
Domiciliary Care  
Homeless Program  
PRRTP PTSD  

iii) Geriatrics & Extended Care Service Line:  
Nursing Home Care Unit  
Dementia Special Care Unit  
Respite Care  
Hospice and Palliative Care  
Consultation/Specialty Clinics  
Transitional Care  

iv) Medicine Service Line:  
Specialty Clinics  
Medical Consults  
Inpatient Consults/Procedures  
Special Case Primary Care  
Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation  
Pathology and Laboratory Medicine  

v) Surgical Specialty Service Line:  
Specialty Clinics  
Surgical Consults  
Operating Room  
Anesthesia  
Post-anesthesia Recovery Room  
Same Day Surgical Unit  
Observation Unit  
Audiology & Speech Pathology  
Dental  
Integrated Pain  

vi) Critical Care Service Line:  
Medical ICU
Surgical ICU  
Coronary Care Unit  
Step Down Unit  
Respiratory Therapy  

vii) **Health Administration Service:**  
Care Management Center  
Patient Registration  
Health Information Management Section  

viii) **Imaging Services:**  
Radiology  
Nuclear Medicine  
Radiation Therapy/Oncology  

ix) **Research:**  
Research projects  
Institutional Review Board  
Research Centers of Excellence  

x) **Patient Care Services Line:**  
Nursing  
Voluntary  
Sterile Processing  

xi) **Community Based Care Service Line:**  
Dementia Caregiver Support  
Community Residential Care  
Homemaker/Home health Program  
Home telehealth  
Community Support and Mental Health Intensive Case Management  
Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation program  
Community Transition Center  
Local Recovery Coordinator/Peer Support  
Domiciliary Services  
Healthcare for Homeless Veterans  
Veteran justice Outreach  
Caregiver Support Stipend Program  
Suicide prevention Program  

xii) **Compensation & Pension and Occupational Health**  

xiii) **Emergency Department**  

xiv) **Pharmacy**
2. **Functions:**
   
   a. Provide for quality and safety of the care, treatment, and services provided by the Service. This requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation of quality and safety, (including access, efficiency, and effectiveness); appropriateness of care and treatment provided to patients (including that provided under temporary privileges or emergency care absent privileges); patient satisfaction activities; patient safety and risk management activities; and utilization management.

   b. Assist in identification of important aspects of care for the Service, identification of indicators used to measure and assess important aspects of care, and evaluation of the quality and appropriateness of care. Utilize VHA performance measures and monitors as a basis for assessing the quality, timeliness, efficiency, and safety of Service activities.

   c. Maintain records of meetings that include reports of conclusions, data, recommendations, responsible person, actions taken, and an evaluation of effectiveness of actions taken. These reports are to be forwarded in a timely manner through channels established by the Medical Staff, at a minimum on a quarterly basis.

   d. Develop criteria for recommending clinical privileges for members of the Service and ensure that ongoing professional practice evaluation is continuously performed and results are utilized at the time of re-privileging.

   e. Define and/or develop clinical privilege statements including levels (or categories) of care that include all requirements of VHA Handbook 1100.19.

   f. Develop policies and procedures to assure effective management, ethics, safety, communication, and quality within the Service.

   g. Annually review privilege templates for each Service and make recommendations to Medical Executive Board.

3. **Selection and Appointment of Vice Presidents:** Vice Presidents are appointed by the Director based upon the recommendation of the Chief of Staff and approved by the VISN and Central Office.

4. **Duties and Responsibilities of Vice Presidents:** The Vice President is administratively responsible for the operation of the Service and its clinical and research efforts, as appropriate. In addition to duties listed below, the Vice President is responsible for assuring the Service performs according to applicable VHA performance standards. These are the performance requirements applicable to the Service from the national performance contract, and cascade from the overarching requirements delegated to the Chief of the Medical Staff. These requirements are described in individual Performance
Plants for each Vice President. Vice Presidents are responsible and accountable for:

a. Completing Medical Staff Leadership and Provider Profiling on-line training within three months of appointment as Service Line Vice President.

b. Clinically related activities of the Service.

c. Administratively related activities of the department, unless otherwise provided by the organization.

d. Continued surveillance of the professional performance of all individuals in the Service who have delineated clinical privileges through FPPE/OPPE.

e. Recommending to the medical staff the criteria for clinical privileges that are relevant to the care provided in the Service.

f. Recommending appointment and clinical privileges for each member of the Service. Service Line VP’s must document their review of all licensed healthcare practitioners in VetPro on the Service Chief’s approval screen and may delegate this responsibility only when another provider is covering in their absence.

g. Assessing recommendations for off-site sources of needed patient care, treatment, and services not provided by the Service and communicating the recommendations to the relevant organizational authority.

h. The integration of the Service into the primary functions of the organization.

i. The coordination and integration of interdepartmental and intradepartmental services. This includes access, efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of care and treatment of patients served and the clinical/professional performance of all practitioners.

j. The development and implementation of policies, manuals, and procedures that guide and support the provision of care, treatment, and services.

k. The assurance of a sufficient number of qualified and competent persons to provide care, treatment, and service.

l. The determination of the qualifications and competence of service personnel who are not licensed independent Practitioners and who provide patient care, treatment, and services.

m. The continuous assessment and improvement of the quality of care, treatment, and services.

n. The maintenance of and contribution to quality control programs, as appropriate.

o. The orientation and continuing education of all persons in the service.
p. The assurance of space and other resources necessary for the service defined to be provided for the patients served.

q. Annual review of all clinical privilege forms to ensure that they correctly and adequately reflect the services being provided at the facility. This review is noted by date of review being included on the bottom of each privilege delineation form.

r. Assesses and recommends to the Chief of Staff off-site sources for needed patient care, treatment, and services not provided by the Service Line or healthcare system.

s. Addressing any request made by a staff member not to participate in an aspect of care due to conflicts with the staff member's cultural values, ethics, and/or religious beliefs and assuring continuity of appropriate patient care in such cases.

ARTICLE V. MEDICAL STAFF COMMITTEES

Section 5.01 General

1. Committees are either standing or special.

2. All committee members, regardless of whether they are members of the Medical Staff, are eligible to vote on committee matters unless otherwise set forth in these Bylaws. A vote to abstain is not considered a vote and should not be used unless there is a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest.

3. The presence of a minimum of twenty-five (25) percent of a committee's members will constitute a quorum.

4. The members of all standing committees, other than the Medical Executive Board, are appointed by the Chief of Staff subject to approval by the Medical Executive Board, unless otherwise stated in these Bylaws.

5. Unless otherwise set forth in these Bylaws, the Chair of each committee is appointed by the Chief of Staff.

6. Robert's Rules of Order will govern all committee meetings.

Section 5.02 Executive Committee of the Medical Staff

1. Characteristics: The Medical Executive Board serves as the Executive Committee of the Medical Staff. The members of the Medical Executive Board are:

   a. Chief of Staff, Chairperson, voting.

   b. Clinical Service Line Vice Presidents, Clinical Chiefs of Departments voting.

   c. Practitioners appointed through the medical staff process, voting.

   d. Director, or designee, ex-officio, non-voting.
e. Nurse Executive, ex-officio, non-voting
f. ACOS/Research, voting
g. Members at Large (will rotate every year - appointed by vote of the Medical Staff) voting
h. Other facility staff as may be called upon to serve as resources or attend committee meetings at the request of the chairperson, with or without vote. For example, a Physician Assistant may be called to be present when an action affecting another Physician Assistant is being considered. Any member of the Medical Staff (with or without vote) is eligible for consideration. Non-voting
i. The majority of the voting members must be fully licensed physicians of medicine or osteopathy.

2. Functions of the Medical Executive Board: The Medical Executive Board:
   a. Acts on behalf of the Medical Staff between Medical Staff meetings.
   b. The Medical Executive Board will serve as the Professional Standards Board. It will act on appointments, promotions, special advancements, probationary reviews, fitness for duty assessments, suspension, termination and other professional actions in regard to the credentialing and privileging of the Medical Staff to ensure that the healthcare system recruits and retains the best-qualified medical staff. When there is doubt about an applicant’s ability to perform the privileges requested, the Board may request a more definitive evaluation of the provider’s practice.
   c. Maintains process for reviewing credentials and delineation of clinical privileges and/or scopes of practice to ensure authenticity and appropriateness of the process in support of clinical privileges and/or scope of practice requested; to address the scope and quality of services provided within the facility.
   d. Acts to ensure effective communications between the Medical Staff and the Director.
   e. Makes recommendations directly to the Director regarding the:
      (i) Organization, membership, structure, and function of the Medical Staff.
      (ii) Process used to review credentials and delineate privileges for the medical staff.
      (iii) Delineation of privileges for each Practitioner credentialed.
      (iv) Development, adoption, amendment and enforcement of the medical staff bylaws, rules, regulations and policies.
      (v) Mechanisms by which medical staff membership may be terminated;
      (vi) Mechanisms for fair hearing procedures;
(vii) Participation of the medical staff in organizational performance improvement activities; as well as the mechanism to conduct, evaluate, and revise such activities;

(viii) Ethical and self-governance actions of the medical staff;

(ix) Corrective action for practitioner-specific issues and systems issues that are identified during the peer review process.

(x) Recommendations for new on-site clinical services and services provided by telemedicine.

f. Coordinates the ongoing review, evaluation, and quality improvement activities and ensures full compliance with Veterans Health Administration Clinical Performance Measures, The Joint Commission, and relevant external standards.

g. Oversees process for addressing instances in which there is “for-cause” concern (substandard care, professional incompetence or professional misconduct) related to a medical staff member.

h. Oversees process by which membership on the medical staff may be terminated consistent with applicable laws and VA regulations.

i. Oversees process for fair-hearing procedures consistent with approved VA mechanisms.

j. Monitors medical staff ethics and self-governance actions.

k. Advises facility leadership and coordinates activities regarding clinical policies, clinical staff recommendations, and accountability for patient care.

l. Receives and acts on reports and recommendations from medical staff committees including those with quality of care responsibilities, clinical services, and assigned activity groups and makes needed recommendations to the Governing Body.

m. Assists in development of methods for care and protection of patients and others at the time of internal and external emergency or disaster, according to VA policies.

n. Acts upon recommendations from the Credentialing and Privileging Department.

o. Acts as and carries out the function of the Physical Standards Board, which includes the evaluation of physical and mental fitness of all medical staff upon referral by the Occupational Health Physician. The Physical Standards Board may have the same membership as the local physician Professional Standards Board or members may be designated for this purpose by the health care facility Director to ensure objectivity. Boards may be conducted at other VA healthcare facilities.

p. Provides oversight and guidance for fee basis/contractual services.
q. Annually reviews and makes recommendations for approval of the Service-specific privilege lists.

r. Establish guidelines to standardize peer review across the VAPHS and will evaluate medical care according to currently recognized community standards and/or practices including, but not limited to Clinical Practice Guidelines, Performance Measures, and InterQual Criteria.

a. The Medical Executive Board will recommend to the Executive Leadership Board/Director appropriate corrective action for practitioner-specific issues (i.e. adverse privileging decisions) and systems issues that are identified during the peer review process.

b. Aggregate data on peer review outcomes and any repetitive trends or patterns of medical practice that need to be addressed with the Medical Staff as a whole, will be discussed at the quarterly meetings of the Medical Staff.

s. The Medical Executive Board is empowered to act on reports from medical staff committees, services, and other groups as appropriate.

t. The Medical Executive Board will review requests by mid-level practitioner to prescribe controlled substances and will recommend to the appropriate discipline – specific Professional Standards Board reporting any limitations or restrictions on the prescriptive authority.

u. The Medical Executive Board will provide a recommendation to the Executive Leadership Board regarding all facets of patient care services including performance improvement, goals, plans, research, mission, services affected and assists with prioritization of hospital-sponsored continuing education activities.

v. The Medical Executive Board will review and act on reports and recommendations for performance improvement from the following Clinical Committees at least on an annual basis:

1) Acute Coronary Syndrome
2) Antimicrobial Stewardship Program
3) Cancer
4) CPR
5) Clinical Informatics
6) Congestive Heart Failure Committee
7) Consult Management Committee
8) Critical Care
9) Home Respiratory Care Team
10) Infection Prevention Committee
11) Integrated Ethics
3. **Meetings:**
   a. **Regular Meetings:** Regular meetings of the Medical Executive Board shall be held at least monthly. The date and time of the meetings shall be established by the Chair for the convenience of the greatest number of members of the Committee. The Chairmen of the various committees of the Medical Staff shall attend regular meetings of the Medical Executive Board when necessary to report the activities and recommendations of their committees; and may attend at other times with the consent of the Chief of Staff. Such attendance shall not entitle the attendee to vote on any matter before the Medical Executive Board.

   b. **Emergency Meetings:** Emergency meetings of the Medical Executive Board may be called by the Chief of Staff to address any issue which requires action of the Committee prior to a regular meeting. The agenda for any emergency meeting shall be limited to the specific issue for which the meeting was called, and no other business may be taken up at an emergency meeting. In the event that the Chief of Staff is not available to call an emergency meeting of the Medical Executive Board, the Director as the Governing Body or Acting Chief of Staff, acting for the Chief of Staff, may call an emergency meeting of the Board.

   c. **Meeting Notice:** All Medical Executive Board members shall be provided at least 7 days advance written notice of the time, date, and place of each regular meeting and reasonable notice, oral or written, of each emergency meeting.

   d. **Agenda:** The Chief of Staff, or in his absence, such other person as provided by these Bylaws, shall chair meetings of the Medical Executive Board.
Board. The Chair shall establish the agenda for all meetings, and a written agenda shall be prepared and distributed prior to committee meetings.

e. **Quorum**: A quorum for the conduct of business at any regular or emergency meeting of the Medical Executive Board shall be a majority of the voting members of the committee, unless otherwise provided in these Bylaws. Action may be taken by majority vote at any meeting at which a quorum is present. The majority of the voting members must be fully licensed physicians of medicine or osteopathy.

f. **Minutes**: Written minutes shall be made and kept on all meetings of the Medical Executive Board, and shall be open to inspection by Practitioners who hold membership or privileges on the Medical Staff.

g. **Communication of Action**: The Chair at a meeting of the Medical Executive Board at which action is taken shall be responsible for communicating such action to any person who is directly affected by it.

4. **Mechanisms by which membership on the Medical Executive Board may be terminated**:

a. **Expiration**: Members-at-large serve in 12-month increments, and termination is automatic at the end of the year unless the individual is re-elected by the Medical Staff.

b. **For cause**:

   i.) Any recommendations will be consistent with proposed changes to VA-approved mechanisms defined by VA Directive 5021, “Employee/Management Relations,” Section A., “Disciplinary and Major Adverse Actions,” and Section B., “Grievances.”

   ii.) In the event a member of the Medical Staff wishes to seek removal of a member of the Medical Executive Board, the process includes:

      (1) Submission of a written request (email or hardcopy) to any member of the MEB, to the Medical Center Director, or to the Chief of Staff.

      (2) All such communications received are forwarded to the Medical Center Director for review and will remain confidential.

      (3) At the discretion of the Medical Center Director, an ad hoc group composed of MEB members may be appointed to review, investigate, and provide advice to the Medical Center Director.

      (4) Urgency and permitted length of time for review and decision-making will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

      (5) The Director may remove any member of the Medical Executive Board, except the Chairperson, while ensuring
Conflict Resolution, Grievance, and Disciplinary Actions are in accordance with all VHA regulatory guidelines and directives.

(6) The Director will provide a formal written response to the sender of the original submission of request for removal, regardless of the decision made.

Section 5.03 Committees of the Medical Staff

1. Executive Leadership Board (Quality): (ELB)
   a. Purpose: ELB is not a subcommittee of the medical staff. ELB monitors and evaluates the quality of care, access to and appropriateness of care, utilization of resources necessary to provide quality of care, safety of patients, and patient satisfaction. ELB will lead the organization in planning, directing, implementing, coordinating, and improving clinical services at the VAPHS. ELB reviews and acts on reports and recommendations from MEB and medical staff committees, service lines and functional teams. ELB oversees patient care activities in the healthcare system and will ensure that deficiencies in the quality of care identified by performance measures, internal and external reviews, etc., are appropriately corrected. Recommendations for performance improvement made by ELB will be forwarded to the Director for final approval. The performance improvement model used within the VAPHS is Understand, Analyze, and Improve. This problem-solving methodology is focused on designing, measuring, accessing and improving health care outcomes and exceeding patient expectations.
   
   b. Functions: Establish and plan implementation of strategic goals and objectives. Oversee on site patient care services (acute care, ambulatory care, Nursing Home care, critical care), and off-site patient care services (community based outpatient clinics). Review and act on performance improvement reports and recommendations submitted by service lines, programs, committees, and other groups. Introduce performance improvement initiatives emphasizing collaboration and a systems approach in administration and clinical areas. Ensure compliance with regulatory and accreditation standards for appropriate accrediting boards (e.g., Joint Commission, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, College of American Pathology, etc.). Quality of care issues investigated by the Clinical Executive Leadership Board and recommendations for corrective action will be forwarded to the Director for final approval. Provide continuous communication between leadership and staff at VAPHS.
   
   c. Composition:
      
i) The Chief of Staff or designee will serve as Chairperson.
ii) The Medical Center Director will serve as the Co-Chairperson

ii) Members will be appointed by the Chairperson. The following are the ex-officio members:

1. Vice President, Primary Care Service Line
2. Vice President, Medicine Service Line
3. Vice President, Surgery Service Line
4. Vice President, Critical Care Service Line
5. Vice President, Geriatrics and Extended Care Service Line
6. Vice President, Behavioral Health Service Line
7. Vice President, Community Based Care Service Line
8. Chief, Finance
9. ACOS/Research
10. Associate Director/Patient Care Services
11. ACOS, Education
12. Chief Department of Emergency Medicine
13. Chief Department of Imaging
14. Quality and Patient Safety Coordinator
15. Executive Assistant to Chief of Staff
16. Representative, Local 2028

iii) Meetings: Monthly.

2. The following Standing Committees hereby are established for the purpose of evaluating and improving the quality of health care rendered, reducing morbidity or mortality from any cause or condition, establishing and enforcing guidelines designed to keep the cost of health care within reasonable bounds, reviewing the professional qualifications of applicants for medical staff membership, reviewing the activities of the Medical Staff and Advanced Practice Professionals and Allied Health Practitioners reporting variances to accepted standards of clinical performance by, and in some cases to, individual Practitioners and for such additional purposes as may be set forth in the charges to each committee.

a. **Antimicrobial Stewardship Program**

   i) **Charge:** To manage the antimicrobial formulary, ensuring than antimicrobials are used in a clinically effective and cost effective manner, reducing inappropriate antimicrobial use, and preventing infection due to drug resistant microorganisms.

   ii) **Composition:** Chief Infectious Disease (chair); Infectious Disease specialist, clinical pharmacist, Infection Prevention specialist, a clinical microbiologist, and an advanced practice nurse. Participation by persons with additional expertise, such as information technology, will occur on an as needed basis.

   iii) **Meetings:** Quarterly

b. **Cancer Committee**:
i) **Charge**: The cancer committee is a standing committee of the VAPHS that is responsible for directing care of patients with cancer. The committee focuses on providing state of the art care from the time of diagnosis through treatment, rehab and at the end of life. It also recognizes the importance of education and prevention.

ii) **Composition**: The committee is multidisciplinary and includes representatives from medical oncology, surgery, radiation therapy, nursing, pharmacy, social service, rehab, pathology and the tumor registrar.

iii) **Meetings**: Quarterly.

c. **Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Committee**:

i). **Charge**: To oversee the conduct of resuscitation events for acute decompensation events at the facility and to benchmark the results to national standards. The committee seeks to facilitate efforts to improve outcomes for such activities.

ii). **Composition**: Physicians (cardiology, critical care, anesthesia), nurses representing education, critical care, acute and long term care floors, pharmacists allied professionals including respiratory therapists, representative from purchasing and quality assurance.

iii). **Meetings**: monthly to bimonthly

d. **Clinical Informatics**:

i) **Charge**: Provide oversight to the CPRS and HIMS communities of VAPHS. We also serve as a clearinghouse and venue for discussing all computerized clinical information products, services, and processes for VAPHS.

ii) **Composition**: Representation from all service lines, HIMS, and the COS office.

iii) **Meetings**: Monthly

e. **Consult Management Committee**:

i) **Charge**: Provide facility oversight of the consult package and managing the consult initiative and business rule implementation and sustainment. Building requirements such as: consult service titles, document class for note titles, urgency designations, notifications, status changes. Closing unresolved consults.

ii) **Composition**: Chief of Health Informatics Officer who is the chair, Chairs for each of the standing subcommittees and workgroups that report to the CMC, Nurse Informatics, Telehealth and Rural Access Coordinator, Associate Chief of Quality Management, Chief of
HIMS, if the Chief Health Informatics Officer is not a physician and if none of the subcommittee chairs are physicians, then a physician will be appointed by the Chief of Staff.

f. Critical Care Committee:
   i) **Charge:** To provide safe, high-quality care through efficient utilization of resources; to implement effective administrative processes for the continuity of care, data acquisition and analysis, bed access and utilization, admission/discharge and triaging; to monitor and evaluate the quality, efficiency and appropriateness of care and Joint Commission compliance; to promote interdisciplinary planning; and to promote education and research.
   
   ii) **Composition:**
       (1) Vice President CCSL
       (2) Physician Medical Directors, CCU, MICU, SICU, SDU and ED
       (3) Business Manager CCSL
       (4) Nursing Program Leader CCSL
       (5) Nurse Managers, CCU, MICU, SICU, SDU and ED
       (6) Respiratory Therapy Supervisors
       (7) Chief of Cardiology/designee
       (8) Chief of Anesthesiology/designee
       (9) Chief of Medicine/designee
       (10) Chief of Surgery/designee
       (11) Chief of Transplant Services/designee
       (12) CCM Attendings
       (13) In-Patient Pharmacy Supervisor
       (14) CCSL Education Coordinators
       (15) Infection Control Nurse
       (16) Social Worker, CCC
       (17) Nursing Program Leader, Medical/Surgical Area
       (18) Clinical Specialist/Clinical Nurse Leader, Medical/Surgical Area
       (19) Nursing Program Leader, Surgical Specialty
       (20) Quality and Patient Safety Representative
       (21) AFGE Representative

   iii) **Meetings:** Quarterly.

g. Home Respiratory Care Team Committee:
   i) **Charge:** Provide oversight and direction for the respiratory medical activities which VA Pittsburgh provides it’s Veterans in the home setting.
ii) **Composition:** Sleep Disorders Program Director, Medical Director of the Long-term Oxygen Therapy (LTOT) Program, LTOT Clinical Manager, Program Leader for Prosthetics, prosthetics staff.

iii) **Meetings:** Monthly

h. **Infection Control Committee:**

i) **Charge:** Define, survey, correlate, review, evaluate, revise and institute whatever recommendations are necessary in order to prevent, contain, investigate and control nosocomial infections and other infectious diseases among patients and personnel; submit committee minutes to the Medical Executive Board quarterly; and report a summary of its activities to the MEB annually.

ii) **Composition:** Infection control officer and other members of the Medical Staff including physicians and Advanced Practice Professionals; members of Nursing, Environmental Management, Food and Nutrition, Pharmacy Services, microbiology and Administrative Staffs

iii) **Meetings:** Monthly

i. **Integrated Ethics Committee:**

i) **Charge:** The Ethics Committee is a portion of the VAPHS Integrated Ethics program. This program targets three levels of individual and organizational practices—decisions and actions, systems and processes, and environment and culture—by establishing the ethics consultation service, the preventive ethics team, and an ethical leadership function, which includes the establishment of an IE council. The Ethics consultation committee responds effectively to ethical concerns throughout the healthcare system which is essential for both individuals and this organization.

ii) **Composition:** physicians, nursing staff, licensed social workers, chaplains, and other individuals who have an interest in ethics.

iii) **Meetings:** Monthly.

j. **Mental Health Executive Committee:**

i) **Charge:** Develop and support an interdisciplinary approach to the treatment of patients seeking mental health services. Improve effectiveness and efficiency of mental health services by promoting interdisciplinary cooperation. Assess the impact of the physical, psychological, social, and structural environment of the facility on patients and families, and seek resolution of identified problem areas. Identify mental health needs and objectives for various categories of patients within the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Initiate collaborative efforts in program planning among interested
service lines. Serve as problem solving resource to the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System divisions for short and long-range issues. Develop policies and procedures to monitor the provisions of mental health services at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

Develop a system to ensure continuity of mental health services provided at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and other facilities. Serve as an advisory and problem-solving resource to the Chief of Staff and Healthcare System Director concerning healthcare system policies and procedures for the provision of mental health services.

Coordinate an overall quality improvement program to monitor mental health services.

Review Behavioral Health Programs as well as Quality and Patient Safety monitors at least quarterly. The reviews will include usage of restraint and seclusion; Code Blue; Patient on Patient and Patient on Staff Assaults; Patient Incidents; Behaviors that undermine a culture of safety Subcommittee report; and Military Sexual Trauma reports, as well as review the minutes from the Mental Health Council Meeting. Annually the council will review and revise, as needed, the existing policy on the use of locked wards in the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System to assure that patients are in the least restrictive environment consistent with responsible practice. Review and revise, as needed, existing policies on

(1) Patient rights, privileges and responsibilities
(2) Restraints and seclusion
(3) Management of suicidal behavior
(4) Psychiatric emergency intervention team, code blue.

Considers the mental health of all veterans served by VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and of staff, and attends to the impact on the emotional well-being of veterans and staff of Healthcare system policies, procedures, and programs.

Composition:

(1) Chairperson: Vice President, Behavioral Health Service Line
(2) Designated representative of: Community Based Care Service Line
(3) Chaplain Representative, Behavioral Health
(4) Clinical Nurse Specialist, Behavioral Health Service Line, University Drive
(5) Clinical Nurse Specialist, Patient Care Services, H.J. Heinz Division
(6) Program Leader, Patient Care Services, Behavioral Health
(7) Primary Care Service Line, University Drive
(8) Representative from Geriatrics and Extended Care Service Line
(9) Representative from Quality and Patient Safety
(10) Representative for Education, Behavioral Health
(11) Safety Representative, Behavioral Health
(12) Business Manager, Behavioral Health Service Line,
(13) Administrative Officer, Behavioral Health Service Line
(14) Mental Health Consumer Council Representative
(15) Local Recovery Coordinator
(16) Recording Secretary, Behavioral Health Service Line,

iii) **Meetings:** Quarterly.

k. **Moderate Sedation Committee:**

i) **Charge:** Monitor and track the use of moderate sedation. Submit reports to MEB regarding compliance with VHA and Medical Center rules and regulations regarding moderate sedation. Make recommendations regarding moderate sedation procedures and processes.

ii) **Composition:**

1. Anesthesia
2. Nurse Manager, PACU
3. Pharmacy
4. Service Line representatives for areas where moderate sedation is utilized.

iii) **Meetings:** Quarterly

l. **Palliative Care Committee:**

i) **Charge:** Direct the development of palliative care at VAPHS, Integrate palliative care throughout the VAPHS, Provide Hospice/palliative care education, Assure quality care for those patients with serious illness or who are at the end of life, Monitor quality of care provided to patients with serious illness or who are at the end of life.

ii) **Composition:**

1. Director of Hospice/Palliative Care VAPHS
2. Hospice/palliative Care at UD
3. Palliative Care Chaplain
4. Nurse Educators
5. Director of Medical ICU
6. Physician
7. Social Work Representative UD
(8) Oncology Representative
(9) HVP Coordinator
(10) Hospice/palliative Care Nurse Practitioner
(11) Hospice/palliative Care Social Worker
(12) Hospice/Palliative Care Nurse Manager
(13) Palliative Care Pharmacist
(14) VP, Geriatrics and Extended Care
(15) Volunteer Services
(16) Palliative Care Nutrition Support
(17) Behavioral Medicine
(18) Speech Pathology
(19) Nursing Administration, Heinz
(20) MSW PACT Representatives
(21) PACT Representative

iii) Meetings: Monthly

m. Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee:
   i) Charge: Recommend professional policies regarding evaluation, selection, procurement, distribution, use, safe practices, and other matters pertinent to pharmaceuticals; recommend programs designed to meet the needs of the professional staff of the Facility for complete current information on matters related to pharmaceuticals and current pharmaceutical practices. Coordinate with the Pharmacy Service and Patient Care Services to oversee management on the use of drugs at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Support and promote compliance with the VA National Formulary, as well as oversee appropriate utilization of non-formulary products. Evaluate drugs proposed for use in the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and forward these proposals to the Network if endorsed locally. Recommend and oversee actions pertaining to emerging medication safety issue from VA nationally, the FDA, and other drug safety organizations; review all incidents of recalled drugs to ensure that Pharmacy Service has taken appropriate action.
   ii) Composition: Members of Medical, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Administrative Staffs
   iii) Meetings: Monthly.

n. Radiation Safety Committee:
   i) Charge: Ensure radiation safety for patients and personnel in compliance with applicable regulations. With the assistance of the Radiation Safety Officer oversee the use of licensed radioactive
materials and radiation producing machines and review the radiation safety programs. Review research protocols involving the use of ionizing radiation and recommend changes, as necessary, before giving approval for those protocols which are not considered to be within the standard of care.

ii) **Composition:** Radiation Safety Officer, a representative from management who is neither an authorized user nor a radiation safety officer, and representatives from Patient Care Services (Nursing), Research, Radiology, Radiation Therapy, Cardiology, Nuclear Medicine and Pharmacy.

iii) **Meetings:** Quarterly.

n. **Research and Development:**

i) **Charge:** The Research and Development Committee (R&D/C) has responsibility for ensuring "the scientific quality and appropriateness of all research projects; the protection of human research participants; the safety of research laboratories and personnel engaged in research; and the welfare of animal subjects in research" (VA Handbook 1200.1). With guidance, as needed, from the Office of Research Oversight in VA Central Office, the Research and Development Committee (R&D/C) seeks to ensure that all research regulatory procedures and research activities are in compliance with VHA policies regarding the protection of human subjects, laboratory animal welfare, research safety and security, and research misconduct in VA research. The R&D Committee assesses the impact of potential research proposals on the Medical Center and its service lines, and advises both the ACOS for R&D and the Medical Center Director on administrative and professional aspects of the R&D program.

ii) **Composition:** From the VAPHS Standard Operating Procedures for the R&D Committee (2011):

The R&D Committee must consist of at least 5 voting members. The membership is selected to assure appropriate diversity, including representation by multiple professions and expertise, varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, and both genders. At least two members must be VAPHS investigators who are actively engaged in major R&D programs or who can provide R&D expertise. Whenever possible, at least one voting member will have expertise in biostatistics and research design. The R&D members shall be sufficiently qualified to review the research through their experience, expertise and diversity, including consideration of race, gender, cultural backgrounds, and sensitivity to community issues and/or attitudes. Voting members of the R&D Committee must include:

(a) At least two members from the VAPHS staff who have major patient care or management responsibilities.
(b) At least two members who are VA investigators actively engaged in major R&D programs or who can provide R&D expertise.
(c) At least one member who holds an academic appointment, and is either a full time Federal employee or a part-time permanent Federal employee.
All voting members must be compensated full-time or permanent part-time federal government employees and may fill more than one criterion required for membership.
The voting members (both primary and alternates), are appointed by the Medical Center Director in writing. They serve terms of 3 years, with a possibility for extension. Members may be reappointed without any lapse in time if it is deemed in the best interest of the functioning of the Committee.

ii) Meetings: Quarterly

o. Resident Review Committee:

i) Charge: The Residency Review Committee provides a mechanism by which the VAPHS in collaboration with the Medical Executive Board and University of Pittsburgh Healthcare system Medical Education (UPMCME) oversee Graduate Medical Education (GME) at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. The Committee evaluates reviews and makes recommendations with respect to processes for evaluating the professional performance, educational achievement, supervision, discipline, and termination of residents as it relates to GME. Recommendations and information from the Committee related to the safety and quality of patient care, treatment and services, and educational needs of participants in the professional graduate education program will be communicated to the Medical Executive Board and Facility Director to the UPMC Office of GME for appropriate action. The Resident Oversight Committee will also:

(1) Monitor reports of findings from medical record reviews for compliance with VA standards of resident supervision by staff practitioners for inpatient admissions and outpatient visits involving residents.

(2) Monitor the supervision of diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and consultations involving residents to ensure consistency with graduated levels of resident supervision.

(3) Monitor all incidents and risk events with complications to ensure that the appropriate level of supervision occurred.

(4) Complaints or concerns expressed by staff, patients, families etc., about the safety and quality of care, treatment and services provided by or through House staff will be appropriately addressed by the Residency Oversight Committee and referred to the Medical Executive Board when corrective action is indicated (i.e. educational need).
(5) Review citations of all accreditation and certifying bodies concerns and provide follow up with corrective action as needed to ensure compliance.

(6) Review resident evaluation comments related to the VA training experience and implement recommended changes (e.g. orientation program).

(7) The Annual Report on Residency Training Program (RCN 10-0906) will be submitted to the Medical Executive Board through the Resident Oversight Committee for review. The report will encompass the status of the training programs in the healthcare system, any action taken by accreditation or certifying bodies, any changes in the status of the affiliation, and any resident supervision results identified through the monitoring process.

(8) A Residency Oversight Committee will be established each academic year.

ii) Composition:

(1) A chairperson will be appointed by the Chief of Staff. The Chairperson is a member of the VAPHS Medical Staff with an interest and demonstrated expertise in training residents.

(2) The Committee will be co-chaired by the Associate Chief of Staff for Education (ACOSE). Membership will include the following or their designees: Chief of Staff, Chief of Medicine, Chief of Surgery, Associate Director of Patient Care Services and chiefs of the facility’s clinical services in which residency programs exist, inclusive of Dental. The UPMC GME Office will be invited to send one member.

(3) Membership will also include at least one senior resident (PG2 or higher) of the facility. Only residents who spend three or more months at the VA facility shall be eligible for appointment.

(4) At the discretion of the Facility Director, a physician or dentist who serves in a consulting or attending status may be appointed as a non-voting ex-officio member.

iii) Meetings: Monthly

o. Transfusion Committee:

i) Charge: The role of Transfusion Committee is to oversee the activities of the Transfusion Service as a whole, and educate its staff regarding safe and effective transfusion practices. Activities of the Committee will include but not be limited to:

(1) Follow national guidelines and develop local guidelines for clinical use of blood.
(2) Develop policies and procedures for blood transfusion in the facility

(3) Monitor and clinically review (concurrently or retrospectively) all blood transfusions to ensure appropriate and correct usage of blood thereby reducing unnecessary transfusion and avoiding wastage.

(4) Reviewing all QA data generated by the transfusion service

(5) Recommend corrective actions in transfusion practice

(6) Make arrangements for training of house and clinical staff based on policies and procedures.

(7) Establish criteria for review of utilization of blood and blood products in individual cases

(8) Make periodic reports to the Medical Board

(9) Develop audit criteria for transfusion practice and peer review

(10) Assess blood and blood component use for ways to improve patient care

(11) Review and analyze statistical reports of the transfusion service

(12) Assist the blood suppliers in blood procurement efforts

(13) Assess adequacy and safety of the blood supply.

(14) Promote continuing education in transfusion practices for the hospital staff.

ii) Composition: Representatives from Pathology and Lab Services, Blood Bank, Surgical Specialties, Medical Specialties, Anesthesia, Critical Care, Nursing and Education, Quality and Patient Safety and Emergency Medicine.

iii) Meetings: Quarterly

p. Information Flow to MEB: All Medical Staff Committees, including but not limited to those listed above, will submit minutes of all meetings to the MEB in a timely fashion after the minutes are approved and will submit such other reports and documents as required and/or requested by the MEB.

q. All Committees and teams are charged with assuring that the healthcare system is in compliance with VA regulations, Joint Commission standards, American College of Surgeons Cancer Program standards, and other applicable accreditation standards. Each committee and team is responsible for contributing to the healthcare system-wide approach to
quality assessment, improvement and management. The purpose, function, membership and organization of specific committees are delineated in specifically entitled healthcare system memoranda.

r. Medical staff members, or their designated alternates, will attend at least 50% of meetings of committees of which they are members unless specifically excused by the committee chairperson for appropriate reasons, e.g., illness, leave, clinical requirements, etc. Committee minutes will specify attendance and members will attend the meeting on time and until the business has been concluded.

Section 5.04 Committee Records and Minutes

1. Committees prepare and maintain reports to include data, conclusions, recommendations, responsible person, actions taken, and evaluation of results of actions taken. These reports are to be forwarded in a timely manner through channels established by the Medical Staff, at a minimum on a quarterly basis.

2. Each Committee provides appropriate and timely feedback to the Services relating to all information regarding the Service and its providers.

3. Each committee shall review and forward to the MEB, a synopsis of any subcommittee and/or workgroup findings.

Section 5.05 Establishment of Committees

1. The Medical Executive Board may, by resolution and upon approval of the Director, without amendment of these Bylaws, establish additional standing or special committees to perform one or more Medical Staff functions.

2. The Medical Executive Board may, by resolution and upon approval of the Director, dissolve or rearrange committee structure, duties, or composition as needed to better accomplish Medical Staff functions.

ARTICLE VI. MEDICAL STAFF MEETINGS

1. Regular Meetings: Regular meetings of the Medical Staff shall be held at least annually. A record of attendance shall be kept.

2. Special Meetings: Special meetings of the Medical Staff may be called at any time by the Chief of Staff or at the request of the Director or the MEB. At any such meeting, only that business set forth in the notice thereof will be transacted. Notice of any such meeting shall be deemed sufficient if it is given in writing to the Medical Staff at least forty-eight (48) hours prior thereto. Members of the Medical Staff may request a special meeting either through the Chief of Staff or Director in writing and stating the reason(s) for the request.

3. Quorum: For purposes of Medical Staff business, no less than twenty-five (25) percent of the total membership of the medical staff membership entitled to vote constitutes a quorum.
4. **Charge**: Review findings, conclusions, recommendations and actions taken to improve organizational performance. Special meetings may be convened at the call of the chairperson. A quorum for purposes of medical staff meetings is defined as attendance by at least 25 members. Minutes of medical staff meetings will reflect attendance, issues discussed, conclusions, recommendations, actions, evaluation and follow-up. All members of the active medical staff will be considered as voting members.

5. On an annual basis the Medical Staff will elect three Members-at-Large; two Physicians and one non-physician. These individuals will serve as representatives of the Medical Staff at the Medical Executive Board Meetings.  
   a. A key responsibility of the Members-at-Large is to relay issues or concerns of the front line staff to the Chief of Staff and to serve on administrative or clinical groups to present the views and opinions of the Medical Staff.  
   b. The Members at Large may be assigned to assist with peer reviews, and lead task forces, special projects, etc.

6. **Composition**: The active medical staff members will attend meetings of the medical staff as voting members unless excused for appropriate reasons e.g., illness, leave, or clinical requirements.

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**ARTICLE VII. APPOINTMENT AND ONGOING CREDENTIALING**

**Section 7.01 General Provisions**

1. **Independent Entity**: VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System is an independent entity, granting privileges to the medical staff through the MEB and Governing Body as defined in these Bylaws. Credentialing and privileging are performed prior to initial appointment. Medical Staff, Advanced Practice Professional, and Associated Health Practitioner reappointments may not exceed 2 years, minus one day from the date of last appointment or reappointment date. Medical Staff and Advanced Practice Professional and Associated Health Practitioners must practice under their privileges or scope of practice.

2. **Credentials Review**: All Licensed Independent Practitioners (LIP), and all Advanced Practice Professional and Associated Health Practitioners who hold clinical privileges or scope of practice will be subjected to full credentials review at the time of initial appointment and reappraisal for granting of clinical privileges and after a break in service. All Advanced Practice Professional and Associated Health Practitioners will be subjected to full credentials review at the time of initial appointment, appraisal, or reappraisal for granting a scope of practice if credentialed through the Medical Staff process, as outlines in VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing & Privileging. Credentials that are subject to change during leaves of absence shall be reviewed at the time the individual returns to duty. Practitioners are appointed for a maximum period of 2 years.
3. **Deployment/Activation Status:**
   a. When a member of the medical staff has been deployed to active duty, upon notification, the privileges will be considered in a “Deployment/Activation Status” and the credentialing file will remain active. The Deployments/Activation status must be documented for informational purposes in the MEB minutes. Upon return of the Practitioner from active duty, in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), the Practitioner will update the credentialing file to current status.
   
   b. After verification of the updated information is documented, the information will be referred to the Practitioner’s Service Line Vice President then forwarded to the MEB for recommendation to restore privileges to active, current status, based on evidence of current competence. The Director has final approval for restoring privileges to active and current status. The service chief and Medical Executive Committee should consider putting a FPPE in place to confirm clinical current competence depending upon the length of time away from the facility or other circumstances.
   
   c. In those instances where the privileges lapsed during the call to active duty, the Practitioner must provide additional references or information needed for verification and all verifications must be completed prior to reappointment.
   
   d. In those instances where the Practitioner was not providing clinical care while on active duty, the Practitioner in cooperation with the Service Line Vice President must consider the privileges held prior to the call to active duty and whether a request for modification of these privileges should be initiated, on a short-term basis. These providers may be returned to a pay status, but may not be in direct patient care.

4. **Employment or Contract:** Appointments to the Medical Staff occur in conjunction with VHA employment or under a VHA contract or sharing agreement. The authority for these actions is based upon:
   
   
   b. Federal law authorizing VA to contract for health care services.

5. **Initial Focused Professional Practice Evaluation:**
   
   a. The initial focused professional practice evaluation (FPPE) is a process whereby the Medical Staff evaluates the privilege-specific competence of a Practitioner who does not have documented evidence of competently performing the requested privilege at the organization. This occurs with a new Practitioner or an existing Practitioner who request a new privilege. The performance monitoring process is defined by each Service and must include;
i) Criteria for conducting performance monitoring

ii) Method for establishing a monitoring plan specific to the requested privilege

iii) Method for determining the duration (time or volume based) of the performance monitoring

iv) Circumstances under which monitoring by an external source is required

v) Method/Benchmarks for reporting successful completion of FPPE to be reported through the Medical Executive Committee for closure of FPPE and transition to OPPE

b. Information resulting from the FPPE process will be integrated into the service specific performance improvement program (non-Title 38 U.S.C. 5705 protected process), consistent with the Service’s policies and procedures.

c. If at any time the Service Chief or designee cannot determine the competence of the Practitioner being evaluated during the FPPE process, one or more of the following may occur at the discretion of the Service Chief:

i) Extension of FPPE review period

ii) Modification of FPPE criteria

iii) Privileges (initial or additional) may not be maintained (appropriate due process will be afforded to the Practitioner)

iv) Revocation or Reduction of existing privileges (appropriate due process will be afforded to the Practitioner and will be appropriately managed through Employee Relations and, if a physician or dentist, reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank.)

d. The FPPE process is required for all providers, including Physician Assistants, Clinical Pharmacists, and Contract APRNs, who are on scopes of practice but are credentialed in accordance with VHA Handbook 1100.19, “Credentialing and Privileging” and Medical Staff Bylaws.

e. An initial Medical Staff appointment does not equate to HR employment. FPPE does not equate to an HR probationary period. The FPPE is separate and distinct from the HR probationary review listed below.

i. Initial and certain other appointments made under 38 U.S.C. 7401(l), 7401(3), 5 U.S.C. 3301 are probationary. During the probationary period, professional competence, performance, and conduct will be closely evaluated under applicable VA policies, procedures, and regulations.
ii. If, during this period, the employee demonstrates an acceptable level of performance and conduct, the employee will successfully complete the HR probationary period. Supervisors and managers apply the same processes to the evaluation of individuals employed under provision of 38 U.S.C. 7405 and those utilized under contracts and sharing agreements.

6. **Ongoing Professional Practice Evaluation:**

   a. The on-going monitoring of privileged practitioners is essential to confirm the quality of care delivered. Ongoing professional practice evaluation (OPPE) is a process that continuously evaluates a practitioner’s professional performance to identify practice issues that may impact quality of care and patient safety. Ongoing professional practice evaluation is an evidence-based privilege renewal process and is part of a decision-making process that will be documented every six months to continue a provider’s existing privilege(s) or scope(s) of practice, or to limit or revoke existing privilege(s) or scope(s) of practice prior to or at the time of renewal. Each Service Line Vice President should consider what hospital, regional, state, national, and specialty standards, activities, and data are available to meet these needs. The maintenance of certification is not sufficient in and of itself. There are a number of activities such as direct observation, clinical discussions, and clinical pertinence reviews that, if documented, can also be incorporated into the on-going monitoring process. Data must be practitioner specific, reliable, easily retrievable, timely, defensible, comparable, and risk adjusted where appropriate. Electronic databases may be accessed to assess professional practice related to review of:

      i) Operative and other clinical procedures performed and their outcomes;
      ii) Patterns of blood and pharmaceutical usage;
      iii) Requests for tests and procedures;
      iv) Length of stay patterns;
      v) Morbidity and mortality data;
      vi) Use of consultants;
      vii) Performance Measures;
      viii) Resident supervision;
      ix) Medical record management, etc.

   b. Other information that may added by the Service Line to an ongoing professional practice evaluation may include:

      i) Periodic chart review
      ii) Direct observation;
      iii) Monitoring of diagnostic and treatment techniques;
      iv) Discussion with other individuals involved in the care of each patient including consultants, assistants in surgery, nursing, and administrative personnel;
Bylaws and Rules of the Medical Staff at VAPHS

v) Compliance with hospital policies;
vi) Compliance with mandatory training

c. A provider’s OPPE/FPPE must be completed by individuals with similar education, training and licensure. (i.e. A business manager cannot complete an OPPE/FPPE for a provider.)

d. Relevant information obtained from the ongoing professional practice evaluation is integrated into performance improvement activities. If there is uncertainty or concerns have been reported regarding the practitioner’s professional performance, the Medical Executive Board may request a further investigation. Information resulting from the professional practice evaluation is used to determine whether to continue, limit, or revoke any existing privilege(s). Privileged practitioners have access to the fair hearing and appeal process of the intervention results in corrective action.

i.) Service Line Vice Presidents must be able to demonstrate that relevant practitioner data is reviewed on regular bases (i.e. more than every six months). Consideration may be based on a period of time or a specified number of procedures, and may consider high risk or high volume for an adjustment to the frequency.

ii.) With very few exceptions, VHA data standing alone is not protected by 38 U.S.C. 5705. Its use would dictate the appropriate protections under law. Data that generates documents used to improve the quality of health care delivered or the utilization of health care resources is protected by 38 U.S.C. 5705. Data that is not previously identified as protected by 38 U.S.C. 5705 and is collected as provider-specific data could become part of a practitioner’s provider profile, analyzed in the facility’s defined on-going monitoring program, and compared to pre-defined facility triggers or de-identified quality management data.

iii.) In those instances where a practitioner does not meet established criteria, the Service Line Vice President has the responsibility to document these facts. These situations can occur for a number of reasons and do not preclude a Service Line Vice President recommending the renewal of privileges, but the Service Line Vice President must clearly document the basis for the recommendation of renewal of privileges.

iv.) The Medical Executive Board must consider all information available, including the Service Line Vice President’s
recommendation and reasons for renewal when criteria have not been met, prior to making their recommendation for the granting of privileges to the Director. This deliberation must be clearly documented in the minutes.

v.) The Director shall weigh all information available, as well as the recommendations, in the determination of whether or not to approve the renewal of privileges and document this consideration.

**Section 7.02 Application Procedures**

1. **Completed Application**: Applicants for appointment to the Medical Staff must submit a complete application. The applicant must submit credentialing information through VetPro as required by VHA guidelines. **NOTE: See VHA 1100.19 for full process.** The applicant is bound to be forthcoming, honest and truthful. To be complete, applications for appointment must be submitted by the applicant on forms approved by the VHA, entered into the internet-based VHA VetPro credentialing database, and include authorization for release of information pertinent to the applicant and information listed below. The applicant has the right to correct any information that is factually incorrect by documenting the new information with a comment that the previously provided information was not correct. Follow-up with the verifying entity is necessary to determine the reason for the discrepancy if the Practitioner says the information provided is factually incorrect.

a. **Items specified in Article III, Section 2, Qualifications for Medical Staff Membership, including:**
   
i) **Active, Current, Full, and Unrestricted License**: **Note: In instances where Practitioners have multiple licenses inquiry must be made for all licenses and the process as noted in VHA Handbook 1100.19 must be followed for each license (38USC 7402).** Limitations defined by state licensing authorities must also be considered when considering whether licensure requirements are met.

   ii) Education.

   iii) Relevant training and/or experience.

   iv) Current professional competence and conduct.

   v) Physical and Mental health status to perform the requested privileges.

   vi) English language proficiency.

   vii) Professional liability insurance (contractors only).

   viii) BLS/ACLS approved program using criteria by the American Heart Association. Prior to assuming clinical duties initial appointment to the medical staff, new providers must supply evidence of current certification in BLS as required by VHA policy. Certain clinical
privileges may also necessitate ACLS certification. The provider must maintain certification(s) in order to continue provision of clinical duties as required by VHA policy. Providers exclusively practicing in telemedicine are exempt from the requirement for BLS.

ix) To qualify for moderate sedation and airway management privileges, the Practitioner will have specific, approved clinical privileges and will acknowledge that they have received a copy of “The Sedation and Analgesia by Non-Anesthesia Providers” policy and agree to the guidelines outlined in the policy. They must also be certified in Advance Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and submit evidence of competency through anesthesia.

b. **U.S. Citizenship:** Applicants must be citizens of the United States. When it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens, Practitioners otherwise eligible for Medical Staff appointment who are not citizens will be eligible for consideration for appointment with proof of current visa status and Immigration and Naturalization Service documentation regarding employment authorization, pursuant to qualifications as outlined in 38 U.S.C. 7405 and VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 3.

c. **References:** The names and addresses of a minimum of four individuals who are qualified to provide authoritative information regarding training/experience, current clinical competence, health status and/or fulfillment of obligations as a Medical Staff member within the privileges requested are required. At least one of the references must come from the current or most recent employer or for individuals completing a residency; one reference must come from the residency training program director in the case of individuals completing a residency. The Facility Director may require additional information.

d. **Previous Employment:** A list of all health care institutions or other organizations where the Practitioner is/has been appointed, utilized or employed (held a professional appointment) within the past 10 years, including:
   i) Name of health care institution or practice.
   ii) Term of appointment or employment and reason for departure.
   iii) Privileges held and any disciplinary actions taken or pending against privileges, including suspension, revocation, limitations, or voluntary surrender.

e. **DEA/CDS Registration:** A description of:
   i) Status, either current or inactive.
   ii) Any previously successful or currently pending challenges to, or the voluntary relinquishment of, the Practitioner’s Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) registration.
f. **Sanctions or Limitations**: Any sanction or penalty by any licensing authority, including current pending challenges, whether a license or registration ever held to practice a health occupation by the Practitioner has been suspended, revoked, voluntarily surrendered, or not renewed.

g. **Liability Claims History**: Status (Open, Pending, Closed, Dismissed, etc.) of any claims made against the Practitioner in the practice of any health occupation including final judgments or settlements, if available.

h. **Loss of Privileges**: Voluntary or involuntary termination of Medical Staff membership or voluntary or involuntary limitation, reduction, or loss of clinical privileges at another health care facility.

i. **Release of Information**: Authorization for release of information, including written consent to the inspection of records and documents pertinent to applicant's licensure, training, experience, current competence, and health status.

j. **Pending Challenges**: Pending challenges against the Practitioner by any hospital, licensing agency, professional group, or society.

2. **Primary Source Verification**: In accordance with VHA Handbook 1100.19 Credentialing and Privileging and VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 3 the facility will obtain primary source verification of:

   a. A minimum of three (3) references for initial credentialing, and two (2) for re-credentialing, from individuals able to provide authoritative information regarding information as described in Article III, Section 2a above.

   b. Verification of current or most recent clinical privileges held, if available.

   c. Verification of status of all licenses current and previously held by the applicant. Verification of current licensure through the primary source Internet site or by telephone is acceptable and must be documented.

   d. Evidence and verification of the ECFMG (Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates) certificate for foreign medical graduates, if claimed, or the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), which is a common evaluation system for foreign medical graduates, who aspire to enter U.S. medical education and health care systems.

   e. Evidence and verification of board certification or eligibility, if applicable.

   f. Verification of education credentials used to qualify for appointment including all postgraduate training.

   g. Evidence of registration with the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) Continuous Query Update, for all members of the Medical Staff and those Practitioners with clinical privileges.

   h. For all physicians screening will be accomplished through the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) Physician Data Center. This screening will report all licenses known to FSMB ever held by the physician. If the screen results in a disciplinary alert, primary source information from the
State licensing board for all actions related to the disciplinary alert as well as a statement from the Practitioner.

i. Confirmation of health status on file as documented by a physician or Advanced Practice Professional approved by the Organized Medical Staff. The request for an evaluation will be determined by the Medical Executive Board. A pre-employment physical, including random drug testing, is required of all full-time, part-time and intermittent employees. Physical examination will be conducted by the Employee Health Service. Final employment is contingent upon the physical examination reflecting no results that would impair the physician’s ability to perform the assigned duties competently. Instances where there is doubt about an applicant’s ability to perform privileges requested, an evaluation by an internal or external sources may be required.

j. Evidence and verification of the status of any alleged or confirmed malpractice. **NOTE:** It may be necessary to obtain a signed VA Form 10-0459, Credentialing Release of Information Authorization request from the Practitioner, requesting all malpractice judgments and disciplinary actions as well as all open investigations and outstanding allegations and investigations. Failure by the Practitioner to sign VA Form 10-0459 may be grounds for disciplinary action or decision not to appoint. Questions concerning applicants, who may qualify for appointment under the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, need to be referred to Regional Counsel.

k. The applicant’s agreement to provide continuous care and to accept the professional obligations defined in the Medical Staff Bylaws, Rules, and Regulations for the facility to which the application is being made.

3. The applicant’s attestation to the accuracy and completeness of the information submitted.

4. **Burden of Proof:** The applicant has the burden of obtaining and producing all needed information for a proper evaluation of the applicant’s professional competence, character, ethics, and other qualifications. The information must be complete and verifiable. The applicant has the responsibility for furnishing information that will help resolve any doubts concerning such qualifications. Failure to provide necessary information within 30 days of the request to the applicant may serve as a basis for denial of employment consideration.

5. **VetPro Required:** All healthcare providers must submit credentialing information into VetPro as required by VHA policy.

**Section 7.03 Process and Terms of Appointment**

1. **Service Line Vice President Recommendation:** The Service Line Vice President or equivalent responsible person to which the applicant is to be assigned is responsible for recommending appointment to the Medical staff based on evaluation of the applicant’s completed application, credentials, demonstrated competency, and a determination that Service criteria for clinical privileges are
By applying for appointment to the medical staff/specifed clinical staff, the applicant:

a. Signifies a willingness to bear the necessary expense to appear for interviews in regard to the application.

b. Authorizes Healthcare system VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System representatives to consult with associates who may have information bearing on competence and qualifications.

c. Consents to the inspection by VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System representatives of all records and documents that may be material for an evaluation of ethical and professional qualifications for staff membership and ability to carry out the requested clinical privileges.

d. Releases from all liability any VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System representatives for their acts performed in good faith and without malice in connection with evaluating the applicant and credentials.

e. Releases from all liability, organizations that in good faith and without malice provide information, including otherwise privileged or confidential information, to VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Healthcare system representatives concerning the applicant’s ability, professional ethics, character, physical and mental health, emotional stability, and other qualifications for staff appointment and clinical privileges.

f. Authorizes and consents to VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) representatives providing other hospitals, professional associations, and other organizations concerned with physician performance and the quality of patient care with any information relevant to such concerns VAPHS may have about the applicant, and releases VAPHS representatives from liability for so doing, provided that such information is furnished in good faith and without malice.

2. The Deans Committee: The Deans Committee may nominate for consideration by the Director, full and part-time physicians and dentists, including Service Line Vice President, consultant and attending staff. The Medical Executive Board recommends medical staff appointment to the Director based on evaluation of credentials of each applicant and a determination that medical staff criteria for clinical privileges are met.

3. CMO Review: In order to ensure an appropriate review is completed in the credentialing process the applicant’s file must be submitted to the VISN Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for review and recommendation as to whether to continue the appointment and privileging process prior to presentation to the Medical Executive Board if the response from the NPDB query indicates that any of the following criteria is met: There have been, for or on behalf of the applicant, (a) three or more medical malpractice payments, (b) a single medical malpractice payment of $550,000 or more, or (c) two medical malpractice payments totaling $1,000,000 or more. The higher level review by the VISN CMO is to assure that all circumstances, including the individual’s explanation of the specific
circumstances in each case, are weighed against the primary source verification and that the appointment is still appropriate. The VISN CMO may consult with Regional Counsel as needed to determine the appropriate documents for primary source verification of the basis for medical malpractice payments. The VISN CMO review will be documented on the Service Line Vice President’s Approval screen in VetPro as an additional entry. Review by the CMO is also required for applicants for initial appointment who have had any licensure actions or may have any pending licensure actions.

4. **MEB Recommendation**: Medical Executive Board recommends Medical Staff appointment based on evaluation of credentials of each applicant and a determination that Medical Staff criteria for clinical privileges are met.

5. **Director Action**: Recommended appointments to the Medical Staff should be acted upon by the Director within 30 calendar days of receipt of a fully complete application, including all required verifications, references and recommendations from the appropriate Service Line Vice President and Medical Executive Board.

6. **Applicant Informed of Status**: Candidates for appointment who have submitted complete applications as defined by these Bylaws will receive written notice of appointment or non-appointment, or return of the application because of inadequate information.

**Section 7.04 Credentials Evaluation and Maintenance**

1. **Evaluation of Competence**: Determination will be made (through evaluation of all credentials, peer recommendations, available quality of care information including Medical Staff monitors) that the Practitioner applying for clinical privileges has demonstrated current competence in professional performance, judgment and clinical and/or technical skill to practice within clinical privileges requested.

2. **Good Faith Effort to Verify Credentials**: A good faith effort will be made to verify, with primary sources, all credentials claimed. A good faith effort to verify is defined as successful verification, or satisfactory evidence, that verification is not possible (records destroyed, health care institution closed, private practice partner deceased, etc.). When it is not possible to obtain documentation, an entry will be placed in the file stating the reason and a secondary source will be sought. The entry will describe the effort made to obtain the information with dates and signature of the individual(s) responsible for the effort. It will also indicate when a secondary source, e.g. copy of diploma, confirmation from someone in practice or training at the same time, is being used in lieu of primary-source verification. The applicant should assist in providing required information for this documentation. **Note**: Verifcation of licensure is excluded from good faith effort in lieu of verification.

a. Before granting clinical privileges, the Chief of Staff will assure that the following information is on file and verified with primary sources, as applicable to ensure that patients will receive quality care, services, and treatment:
Bylaws and Rules of the Medical Staff at VAPHS

i) Current and former licenses in all states.
ii) Current and former DEA license and/or registration.
iii) National Practitioner Data Bank query.
iv) Physical and mental health status information from applicant.
v) Physical and mental health status confirmation and professional competence information from peers or service line leaders.
vi) Continuing education to meet any requirements for privileges requested.
vii) Board certification(s) and/or other advance clinical education.
viii) Relevant practitioner-specific data are compared to aggregate if such data are available.

3. **Maintenance of Files**: A complete and current Credentialing and Privileging (C&P) file including the electronic VetPro file will be established and maintained for each provider requesting privileges. Maintenance of the C&P file is the responsibility of the Chief of Staff. Any time a file is found to lack required documentation, without an entry as noted above in paragraph 2 describing the efforts made to obtain the information, effort will be made to obtain the documentation.

4. **Credentialing Collegiality**: Credentialing information may be shared with another VA facility when the practitioner has requested clinical privileges at another VA facility. The credentials information may be shared via a credentials transfer brief or via VetPro.

5. **Focused Professional Practice Evaluation**: A Focused Professional Practice Evaluation (FPPE) will be initiated at time of initial appointment with privileges, at the time of request for additional privileges, when a provider separates from VAPHS as a close out evaluation, or in case of a “for-cause” event requiring a focused review.
   a. FPPE, implemented at time of initial appointment, will be based on the Practitioner’s previous experience and competence. The evaluation can be defined as comprising a specific time frame, number of procedures or cases, chart reviews, etc. and should be discussed with the Practitioner by the Service Line Vice President.
   b. A FPPE at the time of request for additional privileges will be for a period of time a number of procedures, and/or chart review to be set by the Vice President of the Service Line.
   c. A FPPE is performed at the time of separation as a close out evaluation. This evaluation is to determine if there is a competency concern that may require report to the NPDB.
   d. A FPPE initiated by a “for-cause” event will be set by the Service Line Vice President. FPPE for cause, where there is concern regarding competence and the care being rendered to patients, may require direct supervision and appropriate action on privileges i.e., summary suspension.
   e. The FPPE monitoring process will clearly define and include the following:
Criteria for conducting the FPPE. This is a time-limited process (90 days for new hires), that will be used when a practitioner has the credentials to suggest competence, but additional information or a period of evaluation is needed to confirm competence in the organization’s setting. A focused professional practice evaluation will also be used when a provider requests new clinical privileges or scopes of practice or if questions arise regarding a practitioner’s practice that affect the safety or quality of patient care or following the termination, separation, resignation from VAPHS. The decision to assign a period of performance monitoring to further assess current competence is based on the evaluation of a practitioner’s current clinical competence, practice behavior, and ability to perform requested privileges or scope of practice. The time period for review may not be extended if performance issues have not been fully resolved. An FPPE can be extended secondary to low clinical volumes and adequate data collection to fully assess performance.

Method for monitoring for specifics of requested privilege.

Information for a focused professional practice evaluation may include:

1. Chart Review
2. Monitoring clinical practice patterns
3. Simulation
4. Proctoring
5. External peer review.
6. Discussion with other individuals involved in the care of each patient (e.g. consulting physicians, surgical assistants, nursing or administrative personnel).

Statement of the “triggers” for which a “for-cause” FPPE. Triggers are single incidents or evidence of a clinical practice pattern that generate a need for performance monitoring. Triggers for a “focused” professional practice evaluation will be initiated when:

1. A new employee with clinical privileges or a scope of practice has credentials to suggest competence, but additional information or a period of evaluation is needed to confirm the new employee’s competence in the organization’s setting.
2. An employee has requested a new clinical privilege or scope of practice.
A practitioner requires supervision for a new procedure or modality to be performed at the VAPHS.

The Service Line has questioned a practitioner’s competency in relation to a sentinel event, a provider-specific tort settlement, a substantiated practitioner-specific complaint, a significant safety violation, or repeated or egregious unprofessional behavior.

Concerns have been raised by the Adverse Events and Procedure Review Committee or Medical Executive Board regarding the performance of one or more practitioners.

At the time of separation from VAPHS.

- Measures necessary to resolve performance issues which will be consistently implemented.

Information resulting from the FPPE process will be integrated into the service specific performance improvement program (non-Title 38 U.S.C. 5705 protected process), consistent with the Service’s policies and procedures.

If at any time the Service Line Vice President or designee cannot determine the competence of the Practitioner being evaluated during the FPPE process, one or more of the following may occur at the discretion of the Service Line Vice President:

- Only if low clinical volumes prevent sufficient data collection to assess competency may the FPPE review period be extended.

- Complete FPPE and initiate a new FPPE with modifications to the criteria.

- Privileges (initial or additional) may not be maintained (appropriate due process will be afforded to the Practitioner).

- Termination of existing privileges (appropriate due process will be afforded to the Practitioner and will be appropriately terminated and reported).

The Service Line Vice-President will review the documentation regarding the provider’s performance and will provide a recommendation to the Medical Executive Board.

- The Medical Executive Board will provide a final determination of whether the practitioner is competent to be granted full privileges.

- If the focused professional practice evaluation identified that the provider is unable to perform the procedure(s) independently, the provider may elect to withdraw the request for full privileges without incurring an adverse action.
iii) If the provider was unable to complete the number of required cases during the initial provisional or supervised period, an extension may be requested by the provider. An extension will be considered only if the provider concurs with provisional or supervised privileges during the extension period. The Service Line must concur with the extension and submit the request to the Medical Executive Board for approval.

iv) At the request of the practitioner, and with concurrence of the Service Line Vice-President, the Medical Executive Board may increase the number of cases to be performed during the period of provisional or supervised privileges to provide additional educational opportunities for the practitioner.

v) If the provider disagrees with the findings of the focused professional practice evaluation, an appeal may be filed for adjudication by the Chief of Staff or Designee.

i. If concern for patient safety is raised at any time during the period of time that the provider has provisional or supervised privileges or following the appeal process, the provider’s full privileges will be denied and the action will be reported as a reduction or revocation of privileges to the National Practitioner Data Bank.

j. Noncompliance with any element of the provisional or supervised privileging process will be cause for review by the Medical Executive Board and may result in suspension of provisional or supervised privileges. Suspension of provisional or supervised privileges is considered an adverse action and is reportable to the National Practitioner Data Bank.

Section 7.05 Local/VISN-Level Compensation Panels

Local VISN-level Compensation Panels recommend the appropriate pay table, tier level and market pay amount for individual medical staff members, as outlined in VA Handbook 5007, Part IX/21. Appointment actions recommended by the Professional Standards Board require a separate review for a pay recommendation by the appropriate Compensation Panel.

ARTICLE VIII CLINICAL PRIVILEGES

Section 8.01 General Provisions

1. Clinical privileges are granted for a period of no more than 2 years and are renewed at least every two years based on a birthday cycle except for contract providers. Privileges of contracted providers will automatically expire after one year if the contract will not be renewed. All privileges at this healthcare system pertain to the treatment of the adult and geriatric population only. Admitting privileges are granted to physicians, oral surgeons and dentists.
2. Reappraisal of privileges is required of each Medical Staff member and any other Practitioner who has clinical privileges. Reappraisal is initiated by the Practitioner's Service Line Vice President at the time of a request by the Practitioner for new privileges or renewal of current clinical privileges.
   
a. Although the reappraisal process occurs biennially, ongoing professional practice evaluation is designed to continuously evaluate a Practitioner’s performance.
   b. Reappraisal requires verification of satisfactory completion of sufficient continuing education to satisfy state licensure and Medical Staff requirements.
   
3. For initial and reappointment, all time-limited credentials, including peer appraisals must be current within 180 days of submission of the application. The term current applies to the timeliness of the verification and use for the credentialing and privileging process. If the delay between the candidate’s application and appointment, reappointment or reporting for duty is greater than 180 calendar days, the candidate must update all time-limited credentials and information, including but not limited to licensure, current competence, and supplemental questions. The updated information must be verified prior to consideration by the Medical Executive Board. The verification date of a time-limited credential cannot be more than 120 days prior to the effective date of the privileges.
   
4. The primary source verification of a time-limited credential cannot be greater than 120 days old at the time a practitioner reports for duty. Therefore, if a provider does not report for duty within 90 days of appointment effective date, then the time limited credentials must be updated before the individual can come on site.
   
5. A Practitioner may request modification or accretion of existing clinical privileges by submitting a formal request for the desired change(s) with full documentation to support the change to the Vice President of the Service Line.
   
6. Associated Health and Advanced Practice Professionals who are permitted by law, VHA regulations and the facility to provide patient care services may be granted scope of practice, clinical privileges and/or prescriptive authority based on their assignments, responsibilities, qualifications, and demonstrated competence.
   
7. Requirements and processes for requesting and granting privileges are the same for all Practitioners who seek privileges regardless of the type of appointment or utilization authority under which they function, their professional discipline, or position.
   
8. The process for granting clinical privileges will be delineated by Medical Executive Board (e.g. level of training and experience, patient risk categories, etc.) and will be documented in the healthcare system’s policy on credentialing and privileging. When privilege delineation is based primarily on experience, the individual's credentials record reflects the specific experience and successful results that form the basis for granting of privileges.
9. Practitioners with clinical privileges are approved for and have clinical privileges in one clinical Service but may be granted clinical privileges in other clinical Services. Clinical privileges granted extend to all physical locations of the designated Service(s) within the jurisdiction of the organization and its patient service area. In those instances where clinical privileges cross to a different designated service, all Vice Presidents must recommend the practice.

10. Clinical privileges granted to an applicant will be provider specific and setting-specific. Setting-specific privileges are granted not only based upon the provider’s qualifications, but also upon consideration of the procedures and types of care and treatment and services that can be performed or provided within the setting. The availability of equipment, qualified support personnel, and other resources may impact the granting of privileges for a particular setting. Practitioners who do not have the specified privileges for a specific setting are not to practice in that setting. If a procedure is performed by more than one service within the healthcare system, the requirements or standards for granting clinical privileges will be the same among each of the services within the healthcare system. One standard of care will be guaranteed regardless of practitioner, service, or location within the healthcare system.

11. Granting, renewal, or revision of clinical privileges is also based on the individual’s demonstrated current competence. For renewal or revision of privileges, this may be determined, in part, by the results of other assessment and improvement activities. Specific instances of treatment outcomes and their results of other assessment and improvement activities may also be included. An evaluation of the applicant’s clinical judgment and technical skills in performing procedures and inpatient treatment and management is also included in an evaluation of current competence. Biennial reappraisal of each Medical Staff member and any other practitioner who holds clinical privileges is required. The reappraisal process will include the practitioner’s statements regarding successful or pending challenges to any licensure or registration; voluntary or involuntary relinquishment of licensure or registration; voluntary or involuntary limitation, reduction or loss of privileges at another hospital; voluntary or involuntary termination of medical staff membership; any evidence of an unusual pattern or an extensive number of professional liability actions resulting in a fraud judgment against the applicant, mental and physical status (as it relates to the ability to perform the requested clinical privileges); and any other reasonable indicators of continuing qualifications. Additional information regarding licensure/certification status; NPDB, query; peer recommendations; continuing education accomplishments; and copies of clinical privileges held at other institutions will be secured for review. Evaluation of professional performance, judgment, clinical and/or technical competence and skills is to be based on peer recommendations and provider specific data as compared to aggregate data when available. Ongoing reviews conducted by Service Line Vice-Presidents will include, when applicable, information from surgical case review; infection control reviews; drug usage evaluations; medical record review; blood usage review; pharmacy and therapeutic review; morbidity and mortality data when available, monitoring and evaluation of quality, utilization, risk management, and
appropriateness of care. The reappraisal process should include consideration of such factors as: the number of procedures performed or major diagnoses treated; rates of complications compared with those of others doing similar procedures; and adverse results indicating patterns or trends in a practitioner's clinical practice.

12. Exercise of clinical privileges within any Service is subject to the rules of that Service and to the authority of that Vice President of the Service Line.

13. When certain clinical privileges are contingent upon appointment to the faculty of an affiliate, loss of faculty status results in termination of those privileges specifically tied to the faculty appointment.

14. **Telemedicine**: All Practitioners involved in the provision of telemedicine are subject to all existing requirements for credentialing and privileging, as identified in VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging and related VISN policies. Providers exclusively practicing in telemedicine are exempt from the requirements for maintaining certification in BLS.

15. **Teleconsultation**: All Practitioners providing teleconsultation services are subject to existing requirements for credentialing and privileging, as identified in VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging and related VISN policies. This includes the option of “privilegiing by proxy” in accordance with VHA policy and Joint Commission standards. When this option is utilized, the facility may use the credentialing and privileging decision from the site providing care if the provider is fully credentialed and privileged at that site and a formal agreement is in place, i.e., a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines the arrangement including services to be received and bilateral communication of quality of care concerns, including at minimum, all adverse outcomes.

16. The process of appraisal and granting privileges for the Chief of Staff will be uniformly applied. The Chief of Staff’s requests for privileges will be reviewed and a recommendation made by the relevant Service Line responsible for the specialty area in which the privileges are requested. When the Chief of Staff is considered for privileging, the Chief of Staff will be absent from the deliberations of the MEB and another member of the Board will serve as Chairperson.

### Section 8.02 Process and Requirements for Requesting Clinical Privileges

1. **Burden of Proof**: When additional information is needed, the Practitioner requesting clinical privileges must furnish all information and other supporting documents needed for a proper evaluation of qualifications, professional competence, conduct, and ethics. The information must be complete, accurate, and verifiable. If questions arise, the requesting Practitioner is responsible for furnishing information to clarify concerns or issues on qualifications. Failure to provide necessary information within 30 days of request may result in denial of clinical privileges.

2. **Requests in Writing**: All requests for clinical privileges must be made in writing by the Practitioner and include a statement of the specific privileges being requested in a format approved by the Medical Staff.
3. **Credentialing Application:** The Practitioner applying for initial clinical privileges must submit a complete application for privileges that includes:

   a. Complete appointment information as outlined in Section 7.02.

   b. Application for clinical privileges as outlined in this Article.

   c. Evidence of professional training and experience in support of privileges requested.

   d. A statement of the Practitioner’s physical and mental health status as it relates to Practitioner’s ability to function within privileges. This must be confirmed by a physician acceptable to the Organized Medical Staff. Reasonable evidence of health status may be required by the Medical Executive Board.

   e. A statement of the current status of all licenses and certifications held. Failure to maintain current, active licensure, registration and/or certification will result in a non-patient care assignment and ultimately separation from the VAPHS if the license has not been renewed before the expiration date or end of the grace period as designated by the state of licensure.

   f. A description of any and all (1) sanctions, including those by a hospital, state licensing agency or any other professional health care organization/professional organization/society; (2) voluntary or involuntary relinquishment of licensure or registration; (3) malpractice claims, suits or settlements (e.g. final judgment or settlements); and (4) reduction or loss of privileges at any other hospital within 15 days of the adverse action.

   g. Names of other hospitals at which privileges are held and requests for copies of current privileges held.

   h. Names and addresses of references qualified to provide authoritative information regarding training, experience, competence, health status, and fulfillment of obligations as a Medical Staff member within the privileges requested.

   i. Response time (for on-call responsibilities) as defined by the Service Line.

   j. Evidence of current certification in BLS as required by VHA policy. Certain clinical privileges may also necessitate ACLS certification. The provider must maintain certification(s) in order to continue provision of clinical duties as required by VHA policy. Providers exclusively practicing in telemedicine are exempt from the requirement for BLS. Should the provider return to non-telemedicine clinical duties, certification in BLS is required within 30 days of the clinical transition.

4. **Bylaws Receipt and Pledge:** Prior to the granting of clinical privileges, Medical Staff members or applicants must pledge to provide for continuous care of their patients and agree to abide by the professional obligations in accordance with the Bylaws and Rules. This attestation must be made in VHA’s electronic
credentialing system before the provider can submit their application for appointment or privileges. If the Bylaws are updated between credentialing cycles, the Practitioner will be asked to attest to compliance with the recently approved version of the Bylaws through a mechanism outside of the electronic credentialing system.

5. **Moderate Sedation and Airway Management**: To qualify for moderate sedation and airway management privileges, the Practitioner must have specific, approved clinical privileges comply with VHA Sedation and Analgesia by Non-Anesthesia Providers policy and agree to the guidelines outlined in the policy. They must be certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and demonstrate competency through anesthesia.

Section 8.03 Process and Requirement for Requesting Renewal of Clinical Privileges

1. **Application**: The Practitioner applying for renewal of clinical privileges must submit the following information:
   a. An application for clinical privileges as outlined in Section 7.02. This includes submission of the electronic recredentialing application through VetPro. Since practice, techniques, and facility missions change over time, it is expected that modifications, additions, or deletions to existing clinical privileges will occur over time. Practitioners are encouraged to consider carefully and discuss the appropriateness of specific privileges with the appropriate Service Line Vice President prior to formal submission of privilege requests.
   b. Supporting documentation of professional training and/or experience not previously submitted.
   c. A statement of the Practitioner’s physical and mental health status as it relates to Practitioner’s ability to function within privileges. This must be confirmed by a physician acceptable to the Organized Medical Staff. Reasonable evidence of health status may be required by the Medical Executive Board.
   d. Documentation of continuing medical education related to area and scope of clinical privileges, (consistent with minimum state licensure requirements) not previously submitted.
   e. A statement of the current status of all licenses, licenses previously held which have lapsed since last appointment, and certifications held. The status of all licenses and certifications must be validated. This applies to licenses held in multiple states for the same professional discipline or practice.
   f. A description of any and all (1) sanctions, including those by a hospital, state licensing agency or any other professional health care organization/professional organization/society; (2) voluntary or involuntary relinquishment of licensure or registration; (3) malpractice claims, suits or
settlements (e.g. final judgment or settlements); and (4) reduction or loss of privileges at any other hospital within 15 days of the adverse action.

g. Names and addresses of two peers who are qualified to provide authoritative information regarding training, experience, competence, health status, and fulfillment of obligations as a Medical Staff member within the privileges requested.

h. Names of other hospitals or facility at which privileges are held and requests for copies of current privileges held.

2. Verification: Before granting subsequent clinical privileges, the Credentialing and Privileging Office will ensure that the following information is on file and verified with primary sources, as applicable:

   a. Current and previously held licenses in all states.
   b. Current and previously held DEA/State CDS registration.
   c. NPDB Continuous Query Registration.
   d. FSMB query
   e. Physical and mental health status information from applicant.
   f. Physical and mental health status confirmation.
   g. Professional competence information from peers and Service Line Vice President, based on results of ongoing professional practice monitoring and FPPE.
   h. Continuous education to meet any local requirements for privileges requested.
   i. Board certifications, if applicable.
   j. Quality of care information.

3. Bylaws Receipt and Pledge: Prior to the renewal of clinical privileges, Medical Staff members or applicants must pledge to provide for continuous care of their patients and agree to abide by the professional obligations in accordance with the Bylaws and Rules. This attestation must be made in VHA’s electronic credentialing system before the provider can submit their application for appointment or privileges.

   Section 8.04 Processing an Increase or Modification of Privileges

1. A Practitioner’s request for modification or accretion of, or addition to, existing clinical privileges is initiated by the Practitioner’s submission of a formal request for the desired change(s) with full documentation to support the change to the Clinical Service Line Vice President. This request will initiate the recredentialing process as noted in the VHA Handbook 1100.19.

2. Primary source verification is conducted as required for recredentialing.

3. Current NPDB Continuous Query Registration prior to rendering a decision.
4. A modification or enhancement of, or addition to, existing clinical privileges requires the approval of the Medical Executive Board followed by the Director's/Governing Body’s approval.

5. Administrative Modifications (reduction) of privileges should be pursued when a Practitioner is changing their clinical duties at the facility so that their current privileges reflect current expected practice. Examples would be a change of position, facility no longer providing identified procedures, closure of a clinical program, or low volume and no expectation to perform procedure in the foreseeable future. These modifications are administrative in nature and are not to be considered adverse action thus they are not reportable to NPDB. Initiation of an Administrative Modification may be made by the Practitioner or the Facility. The change should be supported by the service chief and reported to the Medical Executive Committee for concurrence. The provider should be notified in writing of the Administrative Modification to include the specific privileges being administratively reduced, the reason, and confirmation that the action is not considered adverse or reportable. This should not be utilized if there is concern of the Practitioner’s clinical practice. Clinical concerns must be addressed through other procedures outlined in this document.

**Section 8.05 Recommendations and Approval for Initial/Renewal, Modification/Revision of Clinical Privileges**

1. Two peer recommendations will be obtained from providers in the same specialty that can provide authoritative information regarding training/experience, professional competence and conduct, any effect on the privileges being requested, and health status. At least one of the two peer recommendations should be obtained from a provider in the same sub-specialty (when feasible), who had recent contact (within the past two years) and knowledge of the person who is being recommended.

2. The Service Line Vice President where the applicant is requesting clinical privileges is responsible for assessing all information and making a recommendation regarding whether to grant the clinical privileges.

   a. Recommendations for initial, renewal or modification of privileges are based on a determination that applicant meets criteria for appointment and clinical privileges for the Service including requirements regarding education, training, experience, references and health status. Consideration will also be given to the six core competencies in making recommendations for appointment. The same six core competencies are considered for both initial appointment and reappointment. The core competencies are:

   i) Medical/Clinical knowledge (education competency). Practitioners are expected to demonstrate knowledge of established and evolving biomedical, clinical, social services, and the application of their knowledge to patient care with the education of others.

   ii) Interpersonal and Communication skills (documentation; patient satisfaction). Practitioners are expected to demonstrate
interpersonal and communication skills that enable them to establish and maintain professional relationships with patients, families, and other members of health care teams.

iii) Professionalism (personal qualities). Practitioners are expected to demonstrate behaviors that reflect a commitment to continuous professional development, ethical practice, an understanding and sensitivity to diversity and a responsible attitude toward their patients, their profession and society.

iv) Patient Care (clinical competency). Technical and clinical skills that practitioners are expected to provide that is compassionate, appropriate and effective for the promotion of health, prevention of illness, treatment of diseases and care at the end of life.

v) Practice-based Learning & Improvement (research and development). Practitioners are expected to be able to use scientific evidence and methods to investigate, evaluate and improve patient care practices.

vi) System-based Practice (access to care). Practitioners are expected to demonstrate both an understanding of the contexts and systems in which health care is provided and the ability to apply this knowledge to improve and optimize health care.

ii) Recommendation for clinical privileges subsequent to those granted initially are based on reappraisal of physical and mental health status, peer recommendations, continuing education, professional performance, judgment, clinical and/or technical skills and quality of care including results of monitoring and evaluation activities (such as surgical case review, drug usage evaluation, medical record review, blood usage review, medication use review, monitoring and evaluation of quality and appropriateness of clinical aspects of patient treatment and risk management activities, and OPPE.

iii) The decision to grant or deny a privilege(s) and/or review an existing privilege(s) is a consistently objective, evidence-based process. Decisions regarding appointment, reappointment, and initial, renewed or revised clinical privileges are rendered based on the merits of the applicant’s credentials. Gender, race, creed, or national origin is not used in the decision making process. Decisions on membership and granting of privileges will consider the following criteria that are directly related to the quality of care, treatment, and services:

i) Current licensure, and/or certification, as appropriate, verified with the primary source.

ii) The applicant’s specific relevant training, verified with the primary source.

iii) Evidence of physical ability to perform the requested privileges
iv) Data from professional practice review by an organization(s) that currently privilege the applicant (if available).

v) Peer and/or faculty recommendation.

vi) When renewing privileges, review of the practitioner’s performance within the organization.

vii) Assurance by the involved Service Line(s) that the appropriate resources are available to support the required privilege(s): space, equipment, staffing, and financial resources.

3. A practitioner may request a change in privileges by forwarding a written request and supporting documentation through the appropriate Service Line Vice President to the Chairperson, Medical Executive Board.

4. The Service Line Vice President is responsible for assessing all practitioner-specific information and recommending approval of clinical privileges. Essential information, such as space, equipment, and staffing to support the requested privilege is gathered in the process of granting, renewing, or revising clinical privileges. If the Service Line Vice President is the applicant, then the Chief of Staff will be responsible for assessing all information and recommending approval of clinical privileges.

5. Requests to perform new procedures at the VAPHS must be approved by the Medical Executive Board. The criteria for granting a new privilege to a practitioner with a record of competent professional performance of the organization should include information from the practitioner’s professional practice evaluation data that are collected and assessed on an ongoing basis. For the applicant who does not have a current professional performance record at the privileging organization, current data should be collected during a time limited period of privilege-specific professional performance monitoring conducted at the organization. Prior to granting of a privilege, the resources necessary to support the requested privilege must be determined to be currently available, or available within a specified time frame.

6. Medical Executive Board (MEB), the committee responsible for the Medical Executive Function, recommends granting clinical privileges to the Facility Director (Governing Body) based on each applicant successfully meeting the requirements for clinical privileges as specified in these Bylaws. A subcommittee of MEB can make the initial review and recommendation but this information must be reviewed and approved by the MEB.

a. Administrative disapproval of clinical privileges may be based on one or more of the following reasons:

i) The privilege is not a requirement for the provider's position;

ii) The provider lacks sufficient training certification;

iii) The provider lacks a sufficient case number to maintain competency;
iv) The procedure is not performed at the VAPHS;
v) Supportive resources are not available at the VAPHS for this privilege.

b. Requests to the MEB to increase privileges will be accompanied by the appropriate documentation which supports the practitioner's assertion of competence, i.e. advanced education or clinical practice program, clinical practice information from other institution(s), reference, etc. Licensure, NPDB, and any additional education credentials will be verified before any new clinical privileges are granted.

c. Changes in the healthcare system's mission, emergence of new technologies, failure to perform a sufficient number of operations/procedures to maintain proficiency, or non-use of privileges for a high risk procedure or treatment over a period of years, may affect the Service Line Vice President's recommendation for renewal of privileges. These changes will not be construed as a reduction, restriction, loss, or revocation of clinical privileges and are not reportable to the National Practitioner Data Bank.

d. An applicant may require privileges outside his/her area of specialty. The applicant needs to provide a list of procedures for which (s) he feels qualified to perform and evidence of training for the designated procedures. The applicant's Service Line Vice President is to consult with the program leader responsible for the area which the applicant is requesting privileges for, and obtain a recommendation regarding the applicant's qualifications. The applicant's Service Line Vice President may make a recommendation that the applicant be subject to peer review by the program leader most familiar with the privileges being requested. The recommendations regarding the requested privileges are then forwarded to the Medical Executive Board for review.

7. Clinical privileges are acted upon by the Director within 30 calendar days of receipt of the MEB recommendation to appoint. The Director's action is captured via an electronic medium on SharePoint.

8. Approved clinical privileges are placed in the individual Practitioner’s Credentialing and Privileging File, and are readily available to the Practitioner and to appropriate staff on SharePoint for comparison with Practitioner procedural and prescribing practices.

9. The approval of the scope of practice and prescriptive authority for Advanced Practice Professionals and Associate Health Practitioners lays with the professional standards board for each discipline.

10. Failure to file a completed application for reappointment in a timely manner will result in expiration of clinical privileges. The provider will be notified by certified mail return receipt requested.
11. Following the Director’s approval, limitation, or denial of a provider’s clinical privileges, a copy of the clinical privileges is available to the provider and to the Service Line by the Credentialing Office via SharePoint. Prior to the official notification, the Service Line Vice President may discuss the recommendations made by the Medical Executive Board with the provider, so that the provider is aware of any pending changes in clinical privileges. Providers are informed regarding the outcomes of their requests for clinical privileges and are provided a copy of their approved clinical privileges. Approved clinical privilege documents are placed in the individual practitioner credentialing and privileging file. An electronic file of each practitioner’s clinical privileges is available to designated healthcare system staff. This mechanism is intended to ensure that individuals with clinical privileges only provide services within the scope of privileges granted. The electronic file of clinical privileges is updated as changes in clinical privileges for each practitioner are made.

Section 8.06 Exceptions

1. Temporary Privileges for Urgent Patient Care Needs: Temporary clinical privileges for emergent or urgent patient care needs may be granted at the time of an initial appointment for a limited period of time (not to exceed 60 calendar days) by the Director or Acting Director on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff.

a. Temporary privileges are based on verification of the following:

i) One, active, current, unrestricted license with no previous or pending actions.

ii) Relevant training or experience

iii) One reference from a peer who is knowledgeable of and confirms the Practitioner’s competence and who has reason to know the individual's professional qualifications.

iv) Current comparable clinical privileges at another institution.

v) Response from NPDB Continuous Query Registration with no match.

vi) Response from FSMB with no reports.

vii) Other criteria required by the organized medical staff bylaws

viii) No current or previously successful challenges to licensure.

ix) No history of involuntary termination of medical staff membership at another organization.

x) No voluntary limitation, reduction, denial, or loss of clinical privileges.

xi) No final judgment adverse to the applicant in a professional liability action.
b. A completed application must be submitted within three calendar days of temporary privileges being granted and credentialing completed.

2. Expedited Process:
   a. The credentialing process cannot begin until the Practitioner completes and submits the entire application including both the paper forms as well as completing the electronic VetPro application. The Facility:
      i) Verifies education and training;
      ii) Verifies one active, current, unrestricted license from a State, Territory, or Commonwealth of the United States or the District of Columbia;
      iii) Receives confirmation on the declaration of health, by a physician designated by or acceptable to the facility, of the applicant’s physical and mental capability to fulfill the requirement of the clinical privileges being sought;
      iv) Queries licensure history through the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) Physician Data Center and receives a response with no report documented;
      v) Receives confirmation from two peer references who are knowledgeable of and confirm the physician’s competence, including at least one from the current or most recent employer(s) or institution(s) where the applicant holds or held privileges, or who would have reason to know the individual's professional qualifications.
      vi) Verifies current comparable privileges held in another institution; and
      vii) Receives a response from NPDB Continuous Query Registration with no match.
      viii) Verifies that there are no current or previously successful challenges to licensure.
      ix) Verifies that there is no history of involuntary termination of medical staff membership at another organization.
      x) Verifies that there is no history of voluntary limitation, reduction, denial, or loss of clinical privileges.
      xi) Verifies that there is no history of final judgments adverse to the applicant in a professional liability action.

b. A delegated subcommittee of the Medical Executive Board, consisting of at least two voting members of the full committee, recommends appointment to the medical staff.

c. The recommendation by the delegated subcommittee of the Medical Executive Board must be acted upon by the Facility Director.
d. Full credentialing must be completed within 60 calendar days of the date of the Director's/Governing Body’s signature and presented to the Medical Executive Board for ratification.

e. For those providers where there is evidence of a current or previously successful challenge to any credential or any current or previous administrative or judicial action, the expedited process cannot be used and complete credentialing must accomplished through routine processes by the Medical Executive Board.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The expedited appointment process may only be used for what are considered “clean” applications. The expedited appointment process cannot be used if the application is not complete (including answers to supplemental Questions, Declaration of Health, and Bylaws Attestation); or if there are current or previously successful challenges to licensure; ANY history of involuntary termination of medical staff membership at another organization, involuntary limitation, reduction, denial, or loss of clinical privileges; or there has been a final judgment adverse to the applicant in a professional liability action.

3. **Emergency Care**: Emergency care may be provided by any individual who is a member of the Medical Staff or who has been granted clinical privileges, within the scope of the individual’s license, to save a patient’s life or save the patient from serious harm. Once imminent danger has passed, the care of the patient should be transferred as appropriate. Emergency care may also be provided by properly supervised residents of the facility’s affiliated residency training programs.

4. **Provisional Clinical Privileges**: Provisional Privileges are time-limited privileges that may be requested by a provider when the provider has not fully met all criteria.

a. Provisional privileges may be considered when:

   i) A provider has received initial training to perform a new procedure but has not fully developed the required technical skills;

   ii) A provider has not met the required number of cases to be granted full privileges;

   iii) A provider is new to the facility and the provider’s skill level is not known, particularly for high risk/low volume procedures.

b. Provisional privileges may be performed without direct supervision, however during this time the provider will practice under the direction of another provider with full privileges for those privileges granted as provisional. The fully privileged provider will monitor the performance of the provider with provisional privileges throughout the designated provisional period. The provider with provisional privileges will be expected to meet the competency requirements for full privileges before the completion of the provisional period.
PLEASE NOTE: In some situations, especially related to advances in technology or new procedures in the facility (e.g., robotic-assisted surgery), a fully privileged practitioner may not be available on site to provide direction to a provider with provisional privileges. In such cases, the Medical Executive Board will review a proposal from the requesting practitioner and/or Service Line to determine whether the Institutional Review Board and Human Studies Committee should regulate the procedure as research. Such proposals should include a summary of the procedure or technology, an assessment of its risks and benefits compared to other treatment options, and a justification for performance of the procedure.

c. Upon recommendation from the sponsoring Service Line, the Medical Executive Board will review and determine whether the requirements for provisional privileges for each specific procedure have been met. In general, these requirements will include:

i) The provider is fully privileged to perform standard procedures for the disease being treated; if applicable (e.g. a surgeon should be fully privileged to perform an open operation that corresponds to a minimally invasive surgical procedure).

ii) The provider received formalized training at another institution, if available.

iii) The Medical Executive Board will designate who should be assigned to monitor and report outcomes to assure patient safety.

iv) The Medical Executive Board will determine the number of cases to be performed by the provider to be eligible for full privileges that will be based upon the complexity of the procedure, experience of the provider with related procedures, and procedural risk profile.

v) A contingency plan for management of complications will be presented.

d. The Medical Executive Board may grant provisional privileges for a specified period of time. The time period may range from 3 months but is not to exceed 12 months. Provisional privileges up to 12 months may be needed in specialized areas where the caseload may be low to achieve competency within a shorter period of time.

5. Supervised Clinical Privileges: Supervised Clinical Privileges are time-limited privileges that may not be performed independently by a provider and require the participation of another provider with full privileges during the delivery of care. Supervised privileges may be granted for a specified period of time from 6 months but not to exceed 24 months while a provider is learning how to perform a new procedure or is developing a new skill. The level of supervision provided
for supervised privileges will vary and will be determined on an individual case-by-case basis. The level of supervision may include one or more of the following:

a. direct hands-on training;
b. offering guidance or direction during performance of the procedure;
c. review of medical record documentation; or,
d. monitoring procedure outcomes.

6. **Disaster Privileges:** Implemented when circumstances of disaster(s), in which the emergency management plan has been activated, and the healthcare system is unable to handle the immediate patient needs:

   a. In the event of the implementation of the organization-wide disaster management plan, Disaster Privileges may be approved by the Director/Chief of Staff/ or Designee if it is determined that it is not possible to handle the influx of patients with the existing Practitioners. Any of the following will be accepted as credentials verification process for emergency volunteers to provide patient care in the facility:

      i) Evidence of a current license (pocket card sufficient) to practice.
      
      ii) And one of the following:

          (1) A current medical facility photo ID card.
          
          (2) Identification indicating that the individual is a member of a Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT).
          
          (3) Identification that the individual has been granted authority to render patient care in emergency circumstances by a Federal, state, or municipal entity.

   b. The documentation will serve as credentials verification for a period not to exceed ten (10) calendar days or length of the disaster, whichever is shorter. Primary source verification of licensure will be obtained within seventy-two (72) hours after the disaster is under control, or as soon as possible in extraordinary circumstances.

   c. In circumstances where communication methods utilized to verify credentials fail or are unavailable beyond the 10 calendar days or the length of the declared disaster, whichever is shorter, noted in paragraph b above, the Practitioner must be converted to Temporary Privileges in accordance with VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging, for a period not to exceed 60 working days.

   d. An assigned, appropriately credentialed and privileged physician oversees the professional practice of each volunteer, Licensed Independent Practitioner, Advanced Practice Professional, and Associated Health Practitioner.

   e. The quality of the care and service rendered by each volunteer Practitioner with Disaster Privileges must be evaluated at the end of 72
hours and a determination made as to whether or not the Practitioner will be permitted to continue providing services.

f. The practitioner will be identified as a volunteer by a Medical Management armband.

g. The standard credentials verification process will be used. The provider will be appointed by Human Resources as without compensation (WOC) and this appointment will provide liability coverage under the Federal Tort Claim Act.

h. In an emergency situation, any medical staff member with clinical privileges may provide any type of patient care necessary as a life-saving measure or to prevent serious harm (regardless of his/her privileges) if the care, treatment and services provided is within the scope of the individual's license.

7. Inactivation of Privileges: The inactivation of privileges occurs when a Practitioner is not an actively practicing member of the medical staff for an extended period of time such as extended sick leave or sabbatical with or without clinical practice while on sabbatical. Inactivation of privileges for this purpose is administrative and should only be done when there is no concern of substandard care, professional misconduct, or professional incompetence.

a. When the Practitioner returns to the Facility, credentialing and privileging activities are similar to the initial credentialing process with the exception that non-time limited information, e.g., education and training, does not need to be verified again. Inactivation of privileges may not be used as a substitute for termination of medical staff appointment and/or revocation of privileges where such action(s) is warranted.

b. The inactivation should be reported for informational purposes to the Executive Committee with confirmation that the inactivation was not due to substandard care, professional misconduct, or professional incompetence.

c. At the time of inactivation of privileges, including separation from the medical staff, the Facility Director ensures that within 7 calendar days of the date of separation, information is received suggesting that Practitioner met generally accepted standards of clinical practice and there is no reasonable concern for the safety of patients in accordance with VHA regulations and local policies. This is typically documented in the FPPE.

8. Deployment and Activation Privilege Status: In those instances where a Practitioner is called to active duty, the Practitioner’s privileges are documented for information purposes in the MEB minutes as being placed in a Deployment and/or Activation Status. The credential file remains active with the privileges in this new status. If at all possible, the process described below for returning privileges to an active status is communicated to the Practitioner before deployment. **NOTE:** No step in this process should be a barrier in preventing the Practitioner from returning to the Facility in accordance with Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994.
a. Facility staff request that a Practitioner returning from active duty communicate with the Facility staff as soon as possible upon returning to the area.

b. After the electronic credentials file has been reopened for credentialing, the Practitioner must update the licensure information, health status, and professional activities while on active duty.

c. The credentials file must be brought to a verified status. If the Practitioner performed clinical work while on active duty, an attempt is made to confirm the type of duties, the Practitioner’s physical and mental ability to perform these duties, and the quality of the work. This information must be documented.

d. The verified credentials, the Practitioner’s request for returning the privileges to an Active Status, and the Service Line Vice President’s recommendation are presented to the Medical Executive Board for review and recommendation. The documents reviewed, the determination, and the rationale for the determination of the Medical Executive Board is documented and forwarded to the Director for recommendation and approval of restoring the Practitioner’s privileges to Current and Active Status from Deployment and/or Activation Status. The service chief and Medical Executive Committee should consider if a routine FPPE should be implemented to monitor the provider’s practice depending upon the length of time away from the facility.

e. In those instances when the Practitioner’s privileges did not expire during deployment, the expiration date of the original clinical privileges at the time of deployment continues to be the date of expiration of the restored clinical privileges.

f. In those instances where the privileges lapsed during the call to active duty, the Practitioner needs to provide additional references for verification and Facility staff need to perform all verifications required for reappointment.

g. In those instances where the Practitioner was not providing clinical care while on active duty, the Practitioner in cooperation with the Service Line Vice President, must consider whether a request for modification of the privileges held prior to the call to active duty should be initiated on a short-term basis.

h. If the file cannot be brought to a verified status and the Practitioner’s privileges restored by the Director, the Practitioner can be granted a Temporary Appointment to the Medical Staff not to exceed 60 calendar days during which time the credentialing and privileging process must be completed. In order to qualify for this temporary appointment, when returning from active duty the following must be documented in VetPro:

   i) Verification that all licenses that were current at the time of deployment and/or activation are current and unrestricted with no
previous or pending adverse actions on the Temporary Enrollment Screen.

ii) Registration with the NPDB Continuous Query with no match.

iii) A response from the FSMB with no match.

iv) Marking of the Temporary Enrollment Screen as reinstatement from Deployment and/or Activation.

v) Documentation of the Temporary Appointment on the Appointment Screen not to exceed 60 calendar days.

9. It will be the responsibility of the Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE) to credential and privilege the non-donor hospital personnel who participate in organ, tissue and eye recoveries. The credentialing and privileging will be in compliance with the standards established by the Joint Commission.

10. It will be the responsibility of the contractor to credential and privilege personnel who have been contracted to provide patient care services off-site. This credentialing and privileging will be in compliance with the standards established by the Joint Commission as defined in the contract. The only exception will be Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) providers. CBOC providers will be credentialed and privileged by the VAPHS since these providers have direct access to the veterans’ computerized patient record system (CPRS).

11. Visiting professors who are not involved in direct, hands-on patient care and who are mainly observing patient care, do not need to be credentialed and privileged. [Please note: all visiting professors who are involved in direct, hands-on patient care (e.g. learning new medical procedures, surgical techniques, etc.) must be fully credentialed and privileged by the VAPHS.

12. Medical staff who are in an administrative, education, or research role and are not involved in direct, hands-on patient care must be credentialed but do not need to be granted clinical privileges. Medical Staff in these roles may have access to medical records of patients in order to fulfill the obligation of their position.

Section 8.07 Medical Assessment

A medical history and physical examination is completed in accordance with times frames noted in VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations within 30 days before prior to admission or registration. The practitioner must complete and document an updated examination of the patient in accordance with time frames noted in VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations within 24 hours after admission or registration, but prior to surgery or a procedure requiring anesthesia services. The initial and the updated examination of the patient, including any changes in the patient’s condition, must be completed and documented by a physician, a maxillofacial surgeon, or other qualified licensed individual in accordance with state law, VHA and hospital policy. The content of
Bylaws and Rules of the Medical Staff at VAPHS

complete and focused history and physical examination is delineated in Section 3: Responsibility For Care, of the Medical Staff Rules and Regulations.

ARTICLE IX INVESTIGATION, SUMMARY SUSPENSION AND PRIVELEGING ACTIONS

Section 9.01

1. Concerns Identified: Whenever there are concerns that a Practitioner has demonstrated substandard care, professional (clinical) misconduct, or professional (clinical) incompetence, further information will be gathered to either confirm or refute the legitimacy of the concerns. The individual’s immediate supervisor will typically be the individual responsible for conducting a preliminary review of the alleged clinical deficiencies to determine whether a comprehensive focused clinical care review or other administrative review is warranted. The Chief of the Practitioner’s clinical service, the Chief of Staff or the Medical Center Director may also initiate a preliminary fact-finding.

2. Documentation: Whenever a preliminary fact finding confirms a concern considered to be detrimental to patient care, to pose a threat to patient safety, to be lower than the standards of the Medical Staff, or to represent Professional Misconduct, Behavior or Behaviors that Undermine a Culture of Safety, or Inappropriate Behavior, as defined in these Bylaws, further review of the concerns may result in a fact-finding, administrative investigation, or comprehensive focused clinical care review. These findings may result in an administrative action.

a. Material that is obtained as part of a protected performance improvement activity (i.e., 38 U.S.C. 5705) may not be used to support an administrative action although performance improvement data, such as that obtained as a result of an Ongoing Professional Practice Evaluation (OPPE), may trigger a more comprehensive review of the Practitioner’s work.

b. Quality improvement information is confidential and privileged in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 5705. Therefore, if such information is necessary in order to conduct a review of the alleged professional deficiencies and any action resulting from the review, it must be developed through mechanisms independent of the performance improvement program, such as a fact-finding, a comprehensive focused clinical care review, an administrative investigation, etc.

3. Review Process:

a. When sufficient evidence exists, based on the preliminary fact finding, that a Practitioner may have demonstrated substandard care, professional misconduct or professional incompetence that impacts the Practitioner’s ability to deliver safe, high quality patient care, the Chief of Staff will normally appoint one or more impartial clinical care reviewers to complete a comprehensive focused -clinical care review of the concerns(s) or issues(s).
b. The Chief of Staff will determine the appropriate methodology and membership for conducting a review. The individual(s) tasked with performing this review must conduct it in a fair and objective manner, and may be selected from the Practitioner's facility or another facility at the discretion of the Chief of Staff and/or Medical Center Director.

c. If the Practitioner is not summarily suspended as indicated in paragraph 3 of this Part, the Practitioner will be issued a letter notifying the Practitioner that if he/she resigns or retires while the review is being conducted, the Practitioner may be reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB).

d. The individual(s) who are conducting the comprehensive focused clinical care review have the discretion to meet with the Practitioner to discuss or explain the clinical care concerns. This meeting does not constitute a Hearing and none of the procedural rules set forth in Article X of these Bylaws apply thereto. An investigation initiated at the direction of the Chief of Staff is an administrative matter and not an adversarial Hearing. A record of such meeting is made and included with the reviewers' findings, conclusions and recommendations reported to the MEB.

e. The comprehensive focused clinical care review is typically completed within 30-calendar days but may be extended if circumstances warrant a longer review period. Documentation in support of an extension should be maintained, and the Practitioner should be notified on regular intervals of the status of the review and the Practitioner being investigated will be apprised of the extension.

f. The reviewer(s) may review any documentation needed to fully assess the issues (except for those exempt in the paragraph above) and/or interview witnesses, including the Practitioner, at their discretion.

g. The report of the comprehensive focused clinical care review will be made to the MEB within 14 calendar days after the reviewers have completed the investigation. The MEB will assess the results and make a recommendation to the Medical Center Director regarding the appropriate action to be taken. The MEB has the discretion to meet with the Practitioner within 10 calendar days after receipt of the evidence to ask him/her questions about the findings before reaching a conclusion regarding their recommendations. The MEB is not required to meet with the Practitioner, and if the Practitioner fails to meet with the MEB within a reasonable period of time, which is typically 14 calendar days after the meeting is requested, the MEB must submit its recommendation for action without the Practitioner's input. This proceeding does not constitute a hearing, and there is no entitlement to any procedural rules set forth in Article X of these Bylaws or any other VA regulations. The MEB is not required to share the report or any supporting documentation in advance of the proceeding or during the proceeding with the Practitioner. A record
of such proceedings will be made and included with the reviewers’ findings, conclusions and recommendations that are submitted to the Director.

4. **Summary Suspension of Privileges:**
   
The Director has the authority, whenever immediate action must be taken in the best interest of patient care due to the potential of imminent danger to the health and well-being of an individual, including the Practitioner, to summarily suspend all or a portion of a Practitioner’s delineated clinical privileges. Such suspension shall become effective immediately upon imposition by Facility Director.
   
a. The Chief of Staff convenes the MSPSB to investigate the matter, meet with the Practitioner if requested and make a report thereof to the MEB within fourteen (14) days after the effective date of the Summary Suspension.
   
b. Immediately upon the imposition of a Summary Suspension, the Service Line Vice President or the Chief of Staff provides alternate medical coverage for the patients of the suspended Practitioner.

5. **Automatic Suspension of Privileges:**
   
An Automatic Suspension occurs immediately upon the occurrence of specific events.
   
a. The medical staff membership and clinical privileges of any Practitioner with delineated clinical privileges shall be automatically suspended if any of the following occurs:
   
i) The Practitioner is being investigated, indicted or convicted of a misdemeanor or felony that could impact the quality and safety of patients.
   
ii) Failure on the part of any staff member to complete medical records in accordance with system policy will result in progressive disciplinary action to possible indefinite suspension.
   
iii) The Practitioner is being investigated for fraudulent use of the Government credit card.
   
iv) Failure to maintain the mandatory requirements for membership to the medical staff.
   
v) Patient abuse including mental, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse.
   
vi) Any action or behavior that conflicts with patients' rights identified in VA Regulation 38 CFR 17.34A.
   
vii) Intentional omission of care.
   
viii) Willful violations of patient's privacy.
   
ix) Intimidation, harassment, or ridicule of a patient.
   
x) Willful physical injury.
xi) Substance/alcohol abuse while performing duties.

xii) Incompetence in performing granted privileges.

xiii) Expiration of license.

b. The Chief of Staff convenes the Medical Staff Professional Standards Board (MSPSB) to investigate the matter and make a report thereof to the MEB within fourteen (14) days after the effective date of the Automatic Suspension.

c. Immediately upon the occurrence of an Automatic Suspension, the Service Line Vice President or the Chief of Staff provides alternate medical coverage for the patients of the suspended Practitioner.

d. If there are more than three automatic suspensions of privileges in one calendar year, or more than 20 days of automatic suspension in one calendar year, a thorough assessment of the need for the Practitioner's services must be performed and documented and appropriate action taken.

e. The Director will revoke the suspension upon recommendation of the Medical Executive Board.

f. Individuals appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 4114 may be terminated when this is determined to be in the best interests of the VA in accordance with provisions of MP-5, Part II, Chapter 9, and VHA Supplement, without regard to the procedural requirements indicated above.

6. Union Representation: When the Practitioner is a union member, he/she has the right to representation in the interview processes described in paragraphs 1 through 6 of this Article IX.

7. Actions Not Constituting Corrective Action: The MSPSB will not be deemed to have made a proposal for an adverse recommendation or action, or to have made such a recommendation, or to have taken such an action, and the right to a Hearing will not have arisen, in any of the following circumstances:

a. The appointment of an ad hoc investigation committee;

b. The conduct of an investigation into any matter;

c. The making of a request or issuance of a directive to an applicant or a Practitioner to appear at an interview or conference before the Credentials Committee, any ad hoc investigating committee, the Chief of Staff, or any other committee or sub-committee with appropriate jurisdiction in connection with any investigation prior to a proposed adverse recommendation or action;

d. The failure to obtain or maintain any other mandatory requirement for Medical Staff membership;
e. The imposition of proctoring or observation on a Medical Staff member which does not restrict clinical privileges or the delivery of professional services to patients;

f. The issuance of a letter of warning, admonition, or reprimand;

g. Corrective counseling;

h. A recommendation that the Practitioner be directed to obtain retraining, additional training, or continuing education; or

i. Any recommendation or action not "adversely affecting" (as such term is defined in Section 431(1) of the Health Care Quality Improvement Act) any applicant or Practitioner, or which is not based on a subjective determination of the professional competency or conduct of the applicant or Practitioner.

ARTICLE X FAIR HEARING AND APPELLATE REVIEW

Section 10.01 Reduction of Privileges

1. Reduction of Privileges:

   a. Prior to any action or decision by the Director regarding reduction of privileges, that does not also involve a major adverse action, such as a suspension, reduction in grade, or reduction in basic pay, as defined in VA Handbook 5021, the Practitioner will receive written notice of the proposed changes in privileges from the Chief of Staff. The notice will include:

      i) A description of the reason(s) for the change.

      ii) A statement of the Practitioner’s right to be represented by counsel or a representative of the individual’s choice, throughout the proceedings.

   b. The Practitioner will be allowed to review all evidence not restricted by regulation or statute upon which proposed changes are based. Following that review, the Practitioner may respond in writing to the Chief of Staff’s written notice of intent. The Practitioner must submit a response within 10 workdays of the Chief of Staff’s written notice. If requested by the Practitioner, the Chief of Staff may grant an extension for a brief period, normally not to exceed 10 additional workdays except in extraordinary circumstances.

   c. Information will be forwarded to the Director for decision. The Director will make a decision on the basis of the record. If the Practitioner disagrees with the Director’s decision, a hearing may be requested. The Practitioner must submit the request for a hearing within five (5) workdays after receipt of decision of the Director.

   d. A proposed action taken to reduce a Practitioner’s privileges will be made in accordance with VHA Handbook 1100.19. In instances where reduction
of privileges is proposed for permanent Title 38 employees appointed under Section 7401(1) of Title 38 United States Code, the proposed reduction of privileges will be combined with a major adverse action (e.g. suspension, reduction in basic pay, reduction in grade, transfer, etc.) in accordance with Section 7461 7464 of Title 38, United States Code and VA Handbook 5021 Employee/Management Relations. **NOTE:** A major adverse action may not be proposed against a 38 U.S.C. Section 7403 or Section 7405 (except nurses) employee, or a contractor.

2. **Convening a Panel:**

   A panel is not convened if a reduction in clinical privileges is combined with a major adverse action, such as a suspension, reduction in grade, or a reduction in basic pay, due to substandard care, professional misconduct or professional incompetence. A reduction in basic pay may occur when a physician’s salary is reduced by a pay panel as a result in a reduction in privileges. In those instances, the proposed reduction and proposed major adverse action are taken together in accordance with the provisions of VA Handbook 5021, Part II.

   a. In the case of a reduction in clinical privileges that does not constitute a major adverse action or is not combined with a major adverse action in accordance with VA Handbook 5021, the facility Director must appoint a review panel of at least three unbiased professionals, within 5 business days after receipt of the Practitioner's request for a hearing. These professionals will conduct a review and hearing. At least two members of the panel must be members of the same profession. If specialized knowledge is required, at least one member of the panel must be a member of the same specialty. This review panel hearing is the only hearing process conducted in connection with the reduction of privileges. Any other review processes must be conducted on the basis of the record. The hearing will proceed as follows:

      i.) The Practitioner must be notified in writing of the date, time, and place of the hearing. The date of the hearing must not be less than 20 business days and not more than 30 business days from the date of notification letter.

   b. During such hearing, the Practitioner has the right to:

      i) Be present throughout the evidentiary proceedings.

      ii) Be represented by an attorney or other representative of the Practitioner's choice. **NOTE:** If the Practitioner is represented, this individual is allowed to act on behalf of the Practitioner including questioning and cross-examination of witnesses.

      iii) Cross-examine witnesses.
iv) The Practitioner has the right to purchase a copy of the transcript or tape of the hearing.

c. In cases involving reduction of privileges, a determination must be made as to whether disciplinary action should be initiated.

d. The panel must complete the review and submit the report within 15 business days from the date of the close of the hearing. The panel may request in writing that the facility Director grant additional time due to extraordinary circumstances or cause.

i) The panel's report, including findings and recommendations, must be forwarded to the facility Director, who has authority to accept, reject, accept in part, or modify the review panel's recommendations.

ii) The facility Director must issue a written decision within 10 business days of the date of receipt of the panel's report. If the Practitioner's privileges are reduced, the written decision must indicate the reason(s). The signature of the facility Director constitutes a final action and the reduction is reportable to the NPDB.

iii) If the Practitioner wishes to appeal the Director's decision, the Practitioner may appeal to the appropriate VISN Director within 5 business days of receipt of the facility Director's decision. This appeal option will not delay the submission of the NPDB report. If the Director's decision is overturned on appeal, the report to the NPDB must be withdrawn.

iv) The VISN Director must provide a written decision, based on the record, within 20 business days after receipt of the Practitioner's appeal. **NOTE:** The decision of the VISN Director is not subject to further appeal.

e. The hearing panel chair shall do the following:

i) Act to ensure that all participants in the hearing have reasonable opportunity to be heard and to present oral and documentary evidence subject to reasonable limits on the number of witnesses and duration of direct and cross examination, applicable to both sides, as may be necessary to avoid cumulative or irrelevant testimony or to prevent abuse of the hearing process.

ii) Prohibit conduct or presentation of evidence that is cumulative, excessive, irrelevant, or abusive, or that causes undue delay. In general, it is expected that a hearing will last no longer than a total of 15 hours.
iii) Maintain decorum throughout the hearing.

iv) Have the authority and discretion to make rulings on all questions that pertain to matters of procedure and to the admissibility of evidence.

(a) Act in such a way that all information reasonably relevant to the continued appointment or clinical privileges of the individual requesting the hearing is considered by the hearing panel when formulating its recommendations.

(b) Conduct argument by counsel on procedural points and do so outside the presence of the hearing panel.

(c) Seek legal counsel when he or she feels it is appropriate. Regional Counsel to the facility should advise the panel chair.

f. Practitioner Rights: The Practitioner has the right to be present throughout the evidentiary proceedings, represented by counsel or a representative of Practitioner’s choice, (provided that this representative does not have a conflict of interest) cross-examine witnesses, and to purchase a copy of the transcript or tape of the hearing.

i) The Practitioner may submit a written appeal to the VISN Director within five business days of receipt of the Director’s decision.

ii) If a Practitioner surrenders or voluntarily accepts a restriction of his/her clinical privileges, or resigns or retires from his/her medical staff position with the Department of Veterans Affairs while the Practitioner’s professional competence or professional conduct is under investigation to avoid investigation, if greater than 30 days such action is reported without further review or due process to the NPDB and the appropriate state licensing boards.

Section 10.02 Revocation of Privileges

1. Revocation of Privileges:

a. Proposed action taken to revoke a Practitioner’s privileges will be made in accordance with VHA Handbook 1100.19, and the following regulations are applicable:

i) In instances where revocation of privileges is proposed for permanent Title 38 employees appointed under Section 7401(1) of Title 38 United States Code, the proposed revocation will be combined with action to discharge the employee under Section
b. For probationary employees appointed under 38 U.S.C. 7401(1) and part-time temporary registered nurses appointed under 38 U.S.C. 7405, the Professional Standard Board (PSB) will convene in accordance with the procedures outlined in VA Handbook 5021, Employee/Management Relations. If separation is recommended and the recommendation from the PSB is based in whole, or in part, for reasons of substandard care, professional incompetence, or professional misconduct, the Director, or designee, may separate the Practitioner as prescribed in VA Handbook 5021. Separation constitutes an automatic revocation of clinical privileges, which is reportable to the NPDB, if the Practitioner is a physician or dentist, but only after being afforded due process. All practitioners, whether reportable to the NPDB or not, are entitled to due process. Refer to Article X, Section 10.01, para 2 for due process procedures.

c. In instances where the Practitioner is appointed through a contract or other “at will” appointment, including but not limited to part-time (excluding part-time temporary registered nurses who are covered under the procedures in para 5(a)(ii), fee basis, without compensation, or intermittent appointment, separation may occur immediately, but separation constitutes an automatic revocation of clinical privileges and is reportable to the NPDB if the Practitioner is a physician or dentist, and the revocation is for substandard care, professional incompetence, or professional misconduct. A report to the NPDB may not be filed until all due process has been exhausted. Refer to Article X, Section 10.01, para 2 for due process procedures.

d. Revocation procedures will be conducted in a timely fashion. Revocation of clinical privileges may not occur unless the Practitioner is also discharged, separated during probation, or the appointment is terminated. However, in extremely rare cases, there may be a credible reason to reassign the Practitioner to a position not requiring clinical privileges. Such an action may still result in reporting to the NPDB if the Practitioner is a physician or dentist and the revocation of privileges and subsequent reassignment constitutes a major adverse action due to a reduction in grade or basic pay, is for reasons of substandard care, professional incompetence, or professional misconduct (e.g., a surgeon’s privileges for surgery may be revoked, and the surgeon may be reassigned to a non-surgical area when doing so is beneficial to meeting other needs of the facility). Any recommendation by the MEB for the reduction, suspension, or revocation of clinical privileges, or for the suspension or revocation of Medical Staff membership, entitles the Practitioner to the rights set forth in Article X, section 10.01, paragraph 2 of these Bylaws.
2. **Reporting to the National Practitioner Data Bank:***

   a. Tort (“malpractice”) claims are filed against the United States government, not individual Practitioners. There is no direct financial liability for named or involved Practitioners. Government attorneys (Regional Counsel or General Counsel) consider the allegations, and deny, settle, or defend the case. Claims that are denied may subsequently go to litigation.

   b. When a claim is settled or a judgment is made against the Government (and a payment made), a VA review is conducted to determine if the involved Practitioners should be reported to the NPDB. The review must determine that there was substandard care, professional incompetence, or professional misconduct and if so, is attributable to a licensed Practitioner in order to meet reporting requirements.

   c. Practitioners are also identified and notified at the time a tort claim is filed so that they may assist regional and general counsel in defending the case and in decisions concerning denial or settlement.

   d. Post payment reviews are performed nationally by the office of Medical-Legal Affairs. Accordingly, a letter is now sent to physicians involved in the plaintiff’s case when a tort claim settlement is submitted for review.

   e. VA only reports adverse privileging actions that adversely affect the clinical privileges of Physician and Dentists after a professional review action or if the Practitioner surrenders clinical privileges while under investigation. The professional review action is the due process (e.g. fair hearing and appeal process) afforded the Practitioner for a reduction or revocation of clinical privileges. The reference for this is 38 CFR part 46.4. The notice of summary suspension to the Practitioner must include a notice that if a final action is taken, based on professional competence or professional conduct, both the summary suspension, if greater than 30 days, and the final action will be reported to the NPDB. After the final action, the reduction or revocation as well as the summary suspension if greater than 30 days will be reported.

3. **Reporting to State Licensing Boards:** VA has a responsibility to report to state licensing boards appointed or suspended members of the Medical Staff whose behavior or clinical practice so substantially fails or failed to meet generally accepted standards of clinical practice as to raise reasonable concern for the safety of patients.

4. **Management Authority:** Nothing in these procedures restricts the authority of management to detail or reassign, on a temporary basis, an employee to non-patient care areas or activities, thus suspending privileges, during the pendency of any proposed reduction of privileges or discharge, separation, or termination proceedings. Further, the Director, on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff, may summarily suspend privileges, on a temporary basis, when there is sufficient

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1 Reference VHA Handbook 1100.17.
concern regarding patient safety or specific practice patterns. Individuals appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C.7401(1) and 7405 may be terminated when this is determined to be in the best interest of VA in accordance with provisions of VHA Handbook 5021 Employee/Management Relations.

5. Termination of Appointment: Termination of medical staff appointments will be accomplished in conjunction with, and follow procedures for, terminating appointments of practitioners set forth in MP-5, Part II, Chapters 4, 8 and 9 and MP-5, Part I, Chapters 752, 315 and 316.

ARTICLE XI RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. As may be necessary to implement more specifically the general principles of conduct found in these Bylaws and to identify the level of clinical practice that is required of each member of the Medical Staff and of all others with delineated clinical privileges or practicing under a Scope of Practice, Medical Staff Rules and Regulations may be adopted. Rules and Regulations may be adopted, amended, repealed or added by a majority vote of the members of the Medical Executive Board present and voting at any meeting of that Committee where a quorum exists, provided that written recommendations concerning the proposed amendments were received and reviewed by the members of the Committee prior to the meeting. Medical Staff Rules and Regulations must be approved by the Director.

2. This healthcare system functions under Federal law and policies promulgated by the Veterans Health Administration. These rules and regulations are effective at date of issue by VA Headquarters and all Medical Staff must comply with these rules and regulations.

3. In addition, there are VAPHS policies which, in effect, constitute local rules and regulations governing the medical staff and shall be a part of these bylaws, subject to review by the Medical Executive Board at the request of any staff member. Such amendments shall become effective when approved by the Director and all Medical Staff must comply with VAPHS policies.

4. Self-Governance Actions

   a. Competence and performance are monitored through the Ongoing Professional Practice Evaluation and a biennial appraisal of clinical privileges. Continuing education is an adjunct to maintaining clinical skills and current competence. Hospital sponsored educational activities will be offered and related to the type and nature of care, treatment and services offered by the hospital and the findings of performance improvement activities. The MEB will assist with prioritization of hospital-sponsored continuing education as needed.

   b. Individual participation in continuing medical education is required at the time of reprivileging. The VAPHS minimum requirement for continuing
medical education is 40 hours in the field of practice during a two-year re-privileging cycle which must include 20 hours category I CME. The continuing education requirement may be met by formal courses or training; specialty conferences; on-line courses; participation in Grand Rounds, journal clubs, etc.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The required hours for continuing education may be prorated only during the initial credentialing and privileging cycle. When a provider is initially appointed, the provider will be placed on a two-year cycle based on their birthday month. In this situation the provider’s initial cycle may be shortened by a few months and the required hours for continuing education may be reduced (or prorated) due to the shortened credentialing and privileging cycle.

c. Each provider of services for patients presenting with Acute Coronary Syndrome (Acute MI) is required to complete a minimum of 2 Continuing Medical Education (CME) Credit hours per year.

**ARTICLE XII AMENDMENTS**

1. The Bylaws are reviewed at least every two years, revised as necessary to reflect current practices with respect to Medical Staff organization and functions, and dated to indicate the date of last review. Proposed amendments to the Bylaws may be submitted in writing to the Chief of Staff by any member of the Medical Staff. Recommendations for change come directly from MEB. Changes to the bylaws are amended, adopted and voted on by the Organized Medical Staff as a whole and then approved by the Director. The Bylaws are amended and adopted by a majority vote of the members present.

2. Written text of proposed significant changes is to be provided to Medical Staff members and others with clinical privileges. Medical Staff members will be given time to review proposed changes and are notified of the date proposed changes are to be considered.

3. All changes to the Bylaws require action by both the Organized Medical Staff and Facility Director. Neither may unilaterally amend the Bylaws.

4. Changes are effective when approved by the Director.

**ARTICLE XIII ADOPTION**

These Bylaws shall be adopted upon recommendation of the Organized Medical Staff at any regular or special meeting of the Organized Medical Staff at which a quorum is present. They shall replace any previous Bylaws and shall become effective when approved by the Director.
MEDICAL STAFF RULES

1. GENERAL
   A. The Rules relate to role and/or responsibility of members of the Medical Staff and individuals with clinical privileges in the care of any and all patients.
   B. Rules of Departments or Services will not conflict with each other, rules and policies of the Medical Staff, or with requirements of the Governing Body.
   C. The Medical Staff as a whole shall hold meetings at least annually.
   D. The Medical Executive Board serves as the executive committee of the Medical Staff and between the regularly scheduled medical staff meetings, acts in their behalf. The Committee is responsible for continually reviewing the quality of the clinical care carried out in the facility.
   E. Each of the clinical Services shall conduct meetings at least quarterly to consider findings from ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the quality and appropriateness of patient care and treatment. Minutes must reflect discussion by medical staff and responsible party of patient care issues, with resultant significant conclusions, recommendations, action taken, and evaluation of follow-up actions.
   F. Information used in quality improvement as referenced in Article IX, cannot be used when making adverse privileging decisions.

2. PATIENT RIGHTS
   A. Patient’s Rights and Responsibilities: This Organization supports the rights of each patient and publishes policy and procedures to address rights including each of the following:
      i) Reasonable response to requests and need for service within capacity, mission, laws and regulations
      ii) Considerate and respectful care is a safe environment that fosters a sense of dignity, autonomy, and civil rights and respects their cultural, psychosocial and spiritual values.
      iii) Collaboration with the physician in matters regarding personal health care.
      iv) Pain management including assessment, treatment and education.
      v) Information with regard to names and professional status of physicians and all other health care providers responsible for care, procedures, or treatments.
      vi) Formulation of advance directives and appointment of surrogate to make health care decisions.
vii) Access to information necessary to make care decisions that reflect patient's wishes, including potential outcomes, risks and benefits and consequences of refusal of treatment.

viii) Access to information about patient rights, handling of patient complaints.

ix) Participation of patient or patient's representative in consideration of ethical decisions regarding care.

x) Access to information regarding any human experimentation or research/education projects affecting patient care.

xi) Personal privacy and confidentiality of information.

xii) Action by a legally authorized person to exercise a patient's rights if a patient is judged incompetent in accordance with law or is found by a physician to be medically incapable of understanding treatment or unable to communicate his/her wishes.

xiii) Authority of the Chief of Staff (or Acting Chief of Staff or designate) to approve/authorize necessary surgery, invasive procedure or other therapy for a patient who is incompetent to provide informed consent (when no next of kin is available).

xiv) Foregoing or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment including resuscitation.

xv) Nondiscrimination against individuals who use or abuse alcohol or other drugs and persons infected with the human immunodeficiency virus.

xvi) Information related to any billing for health care services.

B. Patients facilitate better treatment outcomes for themselves when they are responsible for participating in their care by:

i) Providing full information to their physician including all symptoms, previous illnesses and medications and reporting any changes in their condition;

ii) Asking questions to clarify what they do not understand;

iii) Being available for medical rounds and distribution of meals and medications when an inpatient;

iv) Following instructions on medications and other treatments as prescribed and informing their provider when they are having difficulty following advice.

v) Informing administrative staff of any changes in address, phone numbers or insurance information and meeting all financial obligations;

vi) Understanding all discharge instructions and keeping scheduled follow-up appointments.
Bylaws and Rules of the Medical Staff at VAPHS

vii) Carrying some personal identification at all times particularly medic alert identification.

C. Patients are responsible for following rules, regulations and staff instruction concerning safety and conduct to enhance their own care and that of other patients, including:

i) Treating other patients, staff and volunteers with dignity, courtesy and respect, and seeking to resolve complaints and requesting assistance in doing so as needed;

ii) Observing smoking regulations, visiting hours and controlling noise;

iii) Safeguarding clothing, money and personal possessions and respecting the property of others. Refraining from bringing firearms, alcohol or non-prescribed medications into the healthcare system;

iv) Alerting staff when another patient is having difficulty and avoiding interference in the treatment of other patients, especially in emergencies;

v) Protecting their privacy by being properly clothed; and

vi) Paying any bills related to care promptly.

D. When a patient fails to act responsibly by not adhering to the rules and regulations of the VAPHS, the physician may consult with the COS to determine appropriate action up to and including administrative discharge.

E. Living Will, Advance Directives, and Informed Consent

i) Competent patients have the right to consent to and, equally, to decline any treatment including the provision of life-sustaining treatment. Accordingly, life-sustaining treatment will not be provided to competent patients who decline it. Similarly, life-sustaining treatment will be provided, consistent with prevailing medical practice, when the competent patient consents or in emergent situations where informed consent may be implied. When the competent patient withdraws consent to any treatment to which the patient has previously consented, including the provision of life-sustaining treatment, such treatment will be withdrawn. He/she will be informed of the medical consequences of such decisions.

ii) Medical decisions regarding the patient's diagnosis and prognosis, and treatment options to be presented to the patient, shall be made by the attending in consultation with, as appropriate, other members of the treatment team.

iii) With respect to the documentation of decision making concerning life-sustaining treatment, the following information, at a minimum, will be documented in the progress notes by the attending:
patient’s diagnosis and prognosis; an assessment of the patient's decision making capacity; treatment options presented to the patient for consideration; the patient's decisions concerning life-sustaining treatment.

iv) Competent patients will be encouraged, but not compelled, to involve family members in the decision making process. Patient requests that family members not be involved in or informed of decisions concerning life-sustaining treatment will be honored, and will be documented in the medical record.

v) **Advance Directives:** The patient's right to direct the course of medical care is not extinguished by the loss of decision making capacity. In order that this right may be respected in cases involving such patients, VHA recognizes the right of an adult person to make an advance directive, in writing, concerning all treatment, including life-sustaining treatment. Any competent patient may execute a declaration requesting that some or all life-sustaining treatments be withheld or withdrawn. The desires of any VA patient, as expressed at the time the advance directive is to be implemented, shall supersede those previously expressed in an advance directive. In addition, an advance directive may be revoked by a declarant at any time.

(a) An advance directive is a written statement made by a competent patient which states preferences regarding medical treatment including but not limited to, life-sustaining treatments or which designates a surrogate decision-maker who will make decisions regarding medical care in the event the patient is unable to do so. The directive may include a Living Will, Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare, treatment preferences or valid relevant state-authorized advance directives. All orders for advance directive will follow VAPHS policy, which will include:

(1) An oral statement made by a patient to a VA clinical employee and documented in writing concerning the patient’s wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment, or

(2) A patient's written statement on appropriate VA forms that sets forth the patient’s wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment, or

(3) A "state-authorized advance directive", which is a patient's written statement expressing wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment, which is not made on a VA form, but whose validity is to be determined pursuant to the applicable state law.
(i) The physician, family members and/or significant others may be involved in the decision making when the patient is incompetent to do so. In situations where an incompetent patient has no surrogate and the attending feels that a DNR order is appropriate, consultation should be undertaken with the Chief of Staff to determine the appropriate course of action (i.e. Ethics Consultation).

(ii) Mechanisms for reaching decisions about DNR and withholding of resuscitative services, including mechanisms to resolve conflicts in decision making and documentation requirements are fully discussed in healthcare system policies. After it has been determined that a DNR order is appropriate and the foregoing requirements have been met, a dated and timed order must be entered in the patient's medical record by the attending. In an emergent situation if the attending is not available, the order may be entered by a house officer after discussion with the attending. The attending must sign the DNR order within 24 hours. Documentation in the medical record should include the following information: summary of the patient's medical condition, assessment of the patient's decision-making capacity, patient's/surrogate's wishes regarding resuscitation and other life-sustaining treatment, consultation with other physicians and healthcare providers, and delineation of a supportive care plan.

vi) **Substituted Judgments**: The rights of patients to direct the course of medical treatment are not extinguished by the lack of decision making capacity or by the fact that an advance directive has not been previously executed. VHA is directed by statute to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that medical care is provided only with the full and informed consent of the patient or, in appropriate cases, the patient's surrogate decision maker. Accordingly, "Substituted Consent" shall be secured from an incompetent patient's surrogate decision maker prior to the initiation of treatment, except in emergent situations. The person making decisions for a terminally ill patient who lacks decision making capacity should act as that patient's "surrogate" for purposes of consenting to, or declining, life-sustaining treatment. Life-sustaining treatment will not be withheld or withdrawn under this
paragraph unless the attending is satisfied that the decision of the surrogate decision maker is based on reliable indicators of the direction the patient would personally give were the patient able to do so. Such indicators might include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Oral or written statements or directives rendered by the patient during periods when the patient had decision making capacity.
(b) Reactions voiced by the patient, when the patient had decision making capacity, concerning medical treatment administered to others.
(c) Deductions drawn from the patient's religious, moral, ethical, or philosophical beliefs, from the patient's value system, or from the patient's consistent pattern of decision making with respect to prior medical care. In cases where such indicators are lacking, conflicting, or are insufficient (due, for example, to remoteness or non-specificity) to form a reliable basis for decision making based on the patient's own subjective wishes, life-sustaining treatment will be withheld or withdrawn only when the surrogate decision maker and the attending agree that the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment would be in the patient's best interests. In cases where the attending believes in good faith that the decision of the surrogate decision maker is equivocal, does not reflect the patient's own desires or best interests, or is based, even in part, on factors (such as self-interest) other than the advancement of the patient's own desires or best interests, the attending may decline to implement the decision to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining treatment. Such cases will be referred to an Ethics Advisory Committee or similar body, or Chief of Staff. In cases where the patient lacks the capacity to make medical decisions and no designated surrogate has been identified, an ethics consult should be placed for a multidisciplinary team to discuss the life sustaining treatment plan and orders.

3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARE
A. Conduct of Care
i) Management of the patient's general medical condition is the responsibility of a qualified member of the Medical Staff. Care is delivered primarily to an adult and geriatric patient population by qualified and competent staff. Management and coordination of a patient's care, treatment and services is the ultimate responsibility of a designated attending. The attending maintains ultimate
responsibility for the patient's care. Treatment and procedures will be provided by competent practitioners as designated by their clinical privileges/scope of practice. Invasive procedures performed by a Non-FPANP or Physician Assistant will be appropriately supervised by a physician. Once a FPANP demonstrates successful practice and competency assessed through the FPPE/OPPE process (as with other LIPs) they may performed specialized privileges.

(a) The attending Staff Physician is responsible for the preparation and completion of a complete medical record for each patient. This record shall include an updated problem list, identification data, chief complaints, personal history, family history, history of present illness, physical examination, special reports such as consultations, clinical laboratory, x-ray and others, provisional diagnosis, medical and/or surgical treatment, operative report, pathological findings, progress notes, doctor's discharge instructions sheet, including condition on discharge (discharge note) and final diagnosis, and final summary.

(b) The attending responsible for the patient must sign the admission note if it is prepared by a resident, intern, or Non-FPANP, or make a note on the admission workup or progress notes to the effect that he/she "agrees with the admission workup and findings" or make whatever comments he/she thinks the case warrants, or prepare a complete admission within 24 hours in the acute care facility located at University Drive and seventy two (72) hours of admission to the Community Living Center located at HJ Heinz Division. In the event a resident, intern, or Non-FPANP prepares an admission workup, all will be retained, but the official workup will contain the responsible Medical Staff physician's approval signature. All resident documentation will follow procedures outlined in the VHA Handbook 1400.1, Resident Supervision.

(c) There is communication among all practitioners involved in a patient's care, treatment, and services. Care is planned and provided in an interdisciplinary, collaborative manner by qualified competent staff. Long term care psychiatry and substance abuse will have documentation evident of multidisciplinary planning for all patients' treatment modalities.

(d) The Department of Veterans Affairs is responsive to a provider's cultural values, ethics, and religious beliefs and the needs of patient care. A provider may request not to
participate in a particular patient's care if it directly conflicts with those beliefs or personal standards.

(1) Requests for such reassignments will be made in writing to the supervisor prior to realignment of responsibility, and will include specific values, ethics, or religious beliefs involved.

(2) The staff member making such a request for reassignment is responsible to realign duties and exchange a particular aspect of care for a given patient with a competent, qualified co-worker.

(3) Under no circumstances will the request be granted if the patient's treatment is negatively affected.

(e) Food and nutrition products are administered only on the prescription or order of a Medical Staff member, an authorized house staff member, or other individual who has been granted authority to write such prescriptions or orders, within their scope of practice.

(f) Progress note entries should be identified as to the type of entry being made, (e.g., Resident Note, Attending Note, Off Service Note, etc.). The Attending Note must be signed by the Attending.

(g) Progress notes will be written by the Practitioner at least once daily on all acutely ill patients. Progress notes are written for all patients seen for ambulatory care by the medical staff.

(h) Evidence of required supervision of all care by the attending shall be documented in the medical record, the frequency of notes dependent upon the severity of the illness of the patient. It is a cardinal principle that responsibility for the care of each patient lies with the staff physician to whom the patient is assigned and who supervises all care rendered by residents.

(i) To facilitate communication, a Service Line Vice President and/or Section Chief may authenticate (sign) for another Licensed Independent Provider if the Vice President or Section Chief believes doing so is in the patient's best interests or if the author of the note will not be able to sign the note timely.

(j) Upon determination that a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order is appropriate, the order must be written or, at minimum, countersigned by the attending in the patient's medical record. Decision will be documented in the Life Sustaining Treatment note. At any time a DNR order is written, the
patient’s rights will be observed. Once the order has been entered, it is the responsibility of the attending to ensure that the order and its meaning are discussed with appropriate members of the Facility staff, particularly the nursing staff, so that all involved professionals understand the order and its implications.

(k) Patients will not be transferred out when the Facility has the means to provide adequate care. Patients who are medically stable for transport may be authorized for transfer only after authorization is given by the appropriate provider as defined in facility policy.

(l) Under similar clinical circumstances, the same quality of patient care is provided, by all individuals with delineated clinical privileges, within and across Departments and Services and between all staff members who have clinical privileges.

(m) There is to be a comparable level of quality of surgical and anesthesia care throughout the Facility.

B. Emergency Services

i) The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System UD Division is capable of providing medical and psychiatric emergency services (except trauma care) as designated by written policies and procedures.

ii) A physician is available in-house to provide emergency services 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

iii) Evaluation of applicants regarding emergent/urgent needs and follow-up treatment or referral is done by a qualified physician.

C. Admissions

i) A veteran will not be admitted to the healthcare system against his/her wishes unless s/he has been detained when under Sections 302, 303, 304, or 305 of the PA Mental Health Procedures Act of 1976, or under the applicable commitment law of the state of residence.

ii) Admitting privileges are granted to physicians, oral surgeons, dentists and FPANPs. The admitting service line will assign an attending who is responsible for the total medical/psychiatric care and treatment of the patient and for prompt and accurate medical record completion. Except in an emergency, no patient shall be admitted until a provisional diagnosis has been recorded in the medical record by the admitting provider.

iii) Goals of Care Conversations (GoCC) should occur after admission to an acute care hospital unit (e.g., within 24 hours, or, if not
feasible to do so within that time frame, at the earliest opportunity and not more than 72 hours after admission) and be documented in the life sustaining treatment (LST) note and corresponding LST order (previously referred to as code status) in CPRS. In emergency situations when immediate medical care is necessary to preserve the patient’s life or avert serious impairment to the patient’s health, and the practitioner determines that delaying medical care in order to conduct a GoCC with the patient or patient’s surrogate would increase the hazard to the life or health of the patient, the practitioner should defer the GoCC until the earliest opportunity after the patient has been stabilized.

(a) Responsibility for GoCCs and LST discussion and documentation lies with the attending physicians or other licensed independent practitioners (i.e. FPANPs) who are in charge of the individual patient’s care or who are serving as consultants. Attending physicians or FPANPs may delegate all or part of this responsibility to physician residents and fellows, Non-FPANPs, or physician assistants they deem competent to conduct the GoCC. Medical residents, fellows in training, physician assistants, and non-FPANPs require co-signature for LST notes.

(b) The most recent LST note and orders will be the official reference for life sustaining treatments and code status. The LST note will appear in the CWAD section of the cover sheet of CPRS. The corresponding orders appear in the Orders section of CPRS.

iv) A complete History and Physical (H&P) Examination must be performed by a qualified provider within 24 hours of inpatient admission. For patients readmitted within 30 days of the last admission to this healthcare system an update to the H&P can be done. If completed by a dependent provider, the note must be signed by an LIP. In an emergency when there is no time to record the complete H&P, a progress note describing a brief history and appropriate physical findings and the pre-operative diagnosis must be recorded in the medical record before surgery.

v) The Dental Program will ensure that a dental screen is completed on patients admitted to the healthcare system in accordance with VA regulations. Patients admitted for dental procedures will receive the same medical history and physical examination as patients admitted for other services. This examination is to be completed by a licensed independent provider but the provider need have no further involvement in patient management unless a significant medical problem exists at the time of admission or arises during the course of hospitalization. Treatment performed by the Dental Program will be made a part of the patient’s permanent medical record.
Bylaws and Rules of the Medical Staff at VAPHS

vi) Reassessment of the patient will occur on a daily basis in acute care or when there is a change in the patient's condition. Clinical services directly involved with patient care activities will define in their policies and procedures the information required for patient assessment/reassessment.

vii) Procedures: Medical staff is responsible for the medical care and treatment of all patients, prompt completion and accuracy of the medical record, any special instructions, and transmittal of reports on the condition of a patient to the referring practitioner and family of the patient.

viii) Tests

(a) Appropriate lab work will be performed on inpatients as determined by the admitting providers.

ix) Areas of restricted admission

(a) Criteria must be met for admission to areas providing specialty care services.

(b) The Patient Flow Coordinator (PFC) is responsible for assigning the patient a bed. However, the Transfer Office requests the level of care based on the report from the outside facility and VAPHS admission criteria.

x) Patients admitted with a medical or surgical diagnosis who also have an active psychiatric disorder will be co-managed with psychiatry service and vice versa.

D. Transfers

i) It is the responsibility of the Transfer Office to screen requests for care. The healthcare system shall accept patients for care and treatment who are medically and legally eligible as defined by law and by the Department of Veterans Affairs and who require treatment for which this facility has the means to provide. For humanitarian reasons, in cases that represent a medical emergency, medical care will be rendered until such time that the patient's condition is stable enough either to be discharged from care or to be transferred safely to another health care facility.

ii) Patients will not be transferred to other facilities when the healthcare system has the means to provide adequate care.

iii) When a patient must be transferred, the facility receiving the patient must be able to meet the patient's needs and provide consent to accept the patient. The healthcare system must ensure that the patient is stable for transfer, safe transfer of the patient is arranged, and all pertinent medical information accompanies the patient.
iv) Transfers to and from Critical Care Units are the Unit director’s responsibility with attending physician consultation.

v) The Provider transferring the patient (e.g. Attending, Resident, MOD, FPANP) is responsible for contacting the patient's next of kin when the patient requires a higher level of care due to a change in medical condition (e.g. transfer from HJ Heinz to University Drive).

E. Consultation

i) Consultation: Except in an emergency, consultation with a qualified physician is desirable, when in the judgment of the patient's provider:

(a) The patient is not a good risk for operation or treatment,
(b) The diagnosis is obscure, and/or
(c) There is doubt as to the best therapeutic measures to be utilized.

These judgments rest with the attending responsible for the care of the patient. It is the duty of the healthcare system staff, through its Service Line Vice Presidents and Chief of Staff, to see that members of the staff make appropriate use of consultation.

ii) Consultant: A consultant must be well qualified to give an opinion in the field in which his opinion is sought. The status of the consultant is determined by the Medical Staff and the Professional Standards Boards on the basis of an individual’s training, experience, and competence.

iii) Inpatient Consultations: Inpatient consultations are provided upon request and should be completed within one (1) day of the request, (unless it is an emergency,) and include an examination of the patient and a review of the medical record.

iv) Essentials of a Consultation: A satisfactory consultation includes examination of the patient and review of the medical record. A written opinion signed by the consultant must be included in the medical record. When operative procedures are involved, the consultation note, except in an emergency, shall be recorded prior to the operation.

v) Responsibility for Requesting Consultations: The patient’s attending, through the Chiefs of Services, shall make certain that members of the staff do not fail in the matter of providing consultation as needed.

vi) Psychiatric Consultations: Psychiatric consultation must be requested for all patients who attempt suicide or take a chemical overdose. If the patient refuses to see the consultant, this fact must be documented by the consultant in the medical record.
F. Protective security may be required in the care of combative or emotionally disturbed patients.

G. Restraint and/or seclusion may be used as a therapeutic treatment modality in situations when a patient is at significant risk of harming him/herself or others, and less restrictive interventions have been unsuccessful or inappropriate. Restraints and/or seclusion orders must be time limited. P.R.N. orders are not permissible. The time limits for orders include:
   i) acute illnesses: 24 hours
   ii) behavioral health needs: 4 hours
   iii) Geriatric and extended care needs: 24 hours to 30 days, as use proceeds over time the attending must document the indications/justifications for restraint usage and specify the type of restraint required. More specific information regarding patient observation, orders, and documentation may be found in healthcare system policy

H. An emergency commitment may be initiated when the physician, based upon personal observation, believes that the veteran is severely mentally disabled so as to pose a clear and present danger to oneself or others.

I. Patients with chronic impaired mentation due to drugs, alcohol or psychiatric problems will receive ongoing care through the Behavioral Health Service Line. Interdisciplinary treatment plans will be initiated for implementation of psychiatric or substance-abuse services. The treatment will be reviewed, updated and individualized for each patient, and will include the family as appropriate.

J. An Incident Report is to be completed when an inpatient or outpatient is involved in an incident that either has harmed or has the potential of causing harm to the patient. The licensed independent provider is responsible for examining the patient and documenting the medical evaluation.

K. A sentinel event is defined as an incident resulting in an unanticipated death or major permanent loss of function not related to the natural course of the patient's illness or underlying condition (e.g. suicide, rape, hemolytic transfusion reaction and surgery on the wrong patient or wrong body part).

L. An unplanned clinical occurrence is an incident that results in hospitalization or increased hospital stay for more than observation (e.g. physical or sexual assaults, suicide attempts, patient abuse, missing patients, fires, falls and medication errors).

M. A root cause analysis will be performed to determine more distinct reasons for sentinel events and unplanned clinical occurrences.

N. Surgery is performed only after a history, physical examination, any indicated diagnostic tests, and documentation in the patient's medical
record has been appropriately completed. In emergency a situation in which there is inadequate time to complete the H&P before surgery, a brief note, including the pre-op diagnosis is recorded before surgery.

O. Discharge Planning: Discharge planning is initiated as early as a determination of need is made.

i) Discharge planning provides for continuity of care to meet identified needs.

ii) Discharge planning is documented in the medical record.

iii) Criteria for discharge are determined by the Multidisciplinary Treatment Team.

iv) Discharge plans, including patient/caregiver education, medications, treatment, follow-up, and patient agreement are documented in the medical record.

v) Discharge planning is required to ensure the patient's discharge is as soon as hospitalization is no longer required.

P. Discharge

i) Patients shall be discharged from the Facility only upon the written order of the licensed independent provider and the discharge summary will be completed (signed) and available for review in CPRS within time frames noted in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations of discharge from the inpatient setting and within time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations for CLC residents. At time of completing the final summary, the responsible member of the Medical Staff shall review the medical record to ensure that documents therein pertain to the patient and contain accurate data. The record shall be completed within time frames noted in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations of the discharge of the patient. The physician, dentist or FPANP shall complete his/her portion of the record within thirty time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations, including authentication.

ii) The assessment and plan for discharge by the treatment team will be approved by the attending, will be based on the patient's medical and psychosocial needs, and will emphasize return to the community at the optimal level of functioning. Documentation should reflect the assessment, treatment, patient/family involvement, patient education, referrals, follow-up and outcome. The patient's interdisciplinary treatment team before discharge will evaluate any problems (e.g. family concerns, home care, change in physical/mental status, social needs) that may delay a discharge.

iii) Discharge from the Critical Care Units is based on approved clinical criteria.
iv) Discharge from Post Anesthesia Recovery is based upon the order of the Anesthesiologist. The discharging anesthesiologist’s name must be recorded in the patient’s medical record.

v) Patients from Ambulatory Surgery/Procedure Unit can be discharged based upon order of Licensed Independent Practitioner familiar with the patient or when the Practitioner is not available, based on relevant medical staff approved criteria. The Practitioner’s name is recorded in the patient’s medical record.

vi) An unplanned discharge may occur when a competent patient chooses to terminate his/her hospitalization and refuses any further examination or treatment that is medically indicated. The physician or FPANP is responsible for informing the patient of the inherent clinical risks involved in the unplanned discharge and the events/reason for leaving (if known) should be documented on the Discharge Against Medical Advice Form. The form must be signed by the provider and the patient and is to be a part of the permanent record.

Q. Autopsy

i) Autopsy services are provided by VAPHS when a patient dies while an inpatient at the VAPHS or while under the immediate care of the VAPHS such as during an outpatient or emergency care visit, or during an ambulatory care procedure. The availability of autopsies will be made known to the family of each decedent and the medical staff will attempt to secure authorization for autopsy examinations in all deaths. The autopsy is a significant instrument for continuous monitoring activity as part of the Performance Improvement Program within the Facility. The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System will strive to achieve an autopsy rate of 3% as directed by VHA. It is especially important that autopsies be obtained in the following cases:

(a) Deaths in which autopsy may explain unknown or unanticipated medical complications.

(b) When the cause of death is not known with certainty on clinical grounds.

(c) An autopsy may help to allay the concerns of the family or public regarding the death and to provide reassurance to them regarding the same.

(d) Unexpected or unexplained deaths occurring during or following and medical, surgical and dental diagnostic or therapeutic procedure.

(e) Death of patients who participated in clinical trials.
(f) Unexpected or unexplained deaths that are apparently natural and not subject to forensic medical jurisdiction.

(g) Natural deaths that are subject to, but waived by, forensic medical jurisdiction, e.g.:

(1) Person dead on arrival to hospital
(2) Death within 24 hours of admission.
(3) Death in which patient sustained or apparently sustained an injury while in the hospital.

(h) When it is believed that autopsy would disclose a known or suspected illness that may have a bearing on the survivors or recipients or organs.

(i) Deaths known or suspected to have resulted from environmental or occupational hazards.

ii) Autopsy should be avoided in patients with known or seriously suspected Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease.

iii) There will be legal authorization by the next of kin or legally authorized individual for autopsy in all instances prior to the initiation of an autopsy, except as provided in 38 CFR 17-170. Whenever possible, the physician responsible for the care of the patient at the time of death will be designated to request permission from the next of kin to perform an autopsy.

iv) Autopsy consent may be voice recorded, a witnessed telephone call, or direct consent in writing. Documentation of the request for autopsy and outcome of the request will be entered into the medical record. A staff pathologist shall perform all autopsies.

v) Autopsy examination may be performed for medico-legal reasons in cases of unexpected death upon compliance with 38 CFR 17.170 and VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations.

vi) **Autopsy Rates.** Autopsies are encouraged as per VHA policy.

vii) **Autopsy Criteria.** VHA policy encourages autopsies be requested from next-of-kin for all deaths, with the request and response documented in the clinical record. Autopsy performance is tracked for quality management purposes. Those cases meeting criteria as Medical Examiner’s cases per policy will be referred to the appropriate County Medical Examiner’s Office in accordance with state statutes.

viii) Cases in which death was due to suspected negligence, incompetence, or criminal activity require referral to the Medical Examiner, as do all cases in which death may be due to occupational causes. Guidance should be sought from the Office of the Coroner in each case of suspected medico-legal significance.
ix) Provisional anatomic diagnoses should be available within two (2) working days of the post-mortem exam; complete findings should be available within 90 days. Autopsy findings will be used by the medical staff for performance improvement activities and are a valuable tool in the advancement of medicine and education of physicians.

R. Standard precautions will be vigorously enforced for preventing transmission of infectious diseases.

4. PROVIDERS' ORDERS

A. General Requirements

i) Orders are entered into the electronic medical record (EMR). Handwritten orders may be used in contingency situations as designated in MS-003 Professional Order Policy and must include the date, time and signature of the ordering practitioner. All hand-written orders must be legible.

ii) Verbal orders are strongly discouraged except in emergency situations.

(a) Verbal orders will be accepted by Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Non-Full Practice Authority Advanced Practice Professionals, Pharmacists, Respiratory Therapists, etc. as designated by facility policy and when it clearly is in the best interest of patient care and efficiency. Verbal orders are usually one time orders but can be repeated depending on the ordered frequency for a maximum of 24 hours. To continue beyond 24 hours, the order must be written by the practitioner on the same or next day and within the 24 hour time period.

(b) Verbal orders may be used for urgent patient care situations. Urgent care situations include those in which the nurse/etc. contacts the Licensed Independent Provider to initiate orders regarding treatment concerns or for the patient's comfort (e.g. diet, sleeping medication, pain medication).

(c) Verbal orders will not be accepted for admission orders, inter-hospital transfer orders, discharge orders, or orders for cytotoxic agents. These situations are considered high risk and require physical assessment by the provider before orders can be given.

(d) In the Same Day Surgery Unit verbal orders may be used to expedite outpatient care and treatment and outpatient transfer, or discharge from an outpatient area.
(e) A verbal order must be clearly understood by the recipient, then entered into CPRS and read back to the provider for verification of accuracy before implementation.

(f) Only practitioners who have knowledge of the patient should issue verbal orders for that patient.

(g) All verbal orders must be signed by the ordering practitioner within 24 hours of order entry.

iii) Telephone orders will be accepted when the provider is not in the facility and cannot return in a timely manner and does not have ready access remotely to CPRS. They will be accepted by Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Non-Full Practice Authority Advanced Practice Professionals and Pharmacists as designated by facility policy and when it clearly is in the best interest of patient care and efficiency. Appropriate staff receiving the order telephonically will first write down the verbal order and read back the order to the provider to ensure correctness. Verbal/telephone orders will be entered by the recipient and signed electronically by the provider within 24-hours or the next working day whichever is earlier.

iv) Orders are to be generated only by medical staff or other individuals within the authority of their clinical privileges/scope of practice.

v) Medication orders

(a) Must contain dosage, frequency, and route.
(b) Use of "p.r.n." and "on call" must be qualified.
(c) Medication orders are required for patients to take medication brought into the healthcare system or for the patient to self-administer.
(d) A change in patient status, renewal date of provider’s medication order, or evaluation by the treatment team will be indications for review or revision of medication orders.

vi) Pharmacists may change the following data elements in an order entered by a provider in order to fill the order appropriately:

(a) Orderable Item
(b) Dosage Ordered
(c) Medication Route
(d) Schedule
(e) Special Instructions - if pharmacist states "yes" to include these in the order
(f) Start Date
(g) Stop Date
vii) Policy Orders: A policy order is a clinical protocol that has been clearly defined in writing and formally approved by the Medical Executive Board for use in a specific clinical area, can be entered into the medical record by authorized staff, and implemented without a co-signature of the order by a provider. Policy orders may include routine lab orders, x-rays, EKG, diets, and other non-invasive tests and procedures. Medications are not included as policy orders except in designated areas e.g. Critical Care Center (drugs to be administered at the onset of an arrest) and Primary Care (flu vaccine). Policy orders will not include orders for CT scans, MRIs, or studies or procedures involving the use of IV contrast agents or intravenous solutions. The individual entering the policy order will designate the name of the provider responsible for follow-up of the order during entry of the order. The individual entering the policy order, upon receiving the results obtained from any policy orders (e.g. abnormal test results) will forward to the designated provider as a view alert.

viii) Cancellation of Orders
(a) The following situations cancel all previous orders:
   (1) Patient transfers to another treating specialty.
   (2) Patients who have gone to the Operating Room
       (Exception: Patients who have gone to the operating room for a minor procedure and return to the same treating specialty. Generally, a minor procedure is an operation that is performed under local anesthesia in less than 60 minutes.)
(b) The phrase: "Resume Previous Orders" is not acceptable.
    All orders must be re-entered.

B. Medication Orders
i) All drugs used in the Facility must be on the National Formulary and additions as approved by the VISN Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee or be Investigational Drugs that have been approved by the Research and Development Committee and the Facility P&T committee. Exceptions to the foregoing requirements may be made in use of "provisional drugs" or "non-formulary drugs" which can be issued under specific conditions. National criteria for non-formulary medications are developed by the National VA Medical Advisory Panel and/or at the VISN level. Exceptions are based on an individual patient case by case basis.

ii) All drugs used in the Facility will be stored and dispensed by the Pharmacy.

iii) Duration of Orders:
(a) Schedule II controlled drugs will be written for periods not to exceed fourteen (14) days for in-patients and must be reentered by electronic entry into EMR for each succeeding period of 14 days or less.

(b) Schedule III – V controlled drugs may be written for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days.

(c) Antibiotics orders must include the duration of the therapy.

(d) Orders for all other drugs will be written for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days from the date the first medication was ordered before they expire and must be rewritten.

iv) Ambulatory Care Medication Orders:

(a) All prescriptions must be entered electronically. In accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations.

(b) All prescription controlled substances will follow VHA Handbook 1108-1.

(c) Time frames are in accordance with VHA Policy, State Laws, and regulations (insert time frame) is the maximum duration for applicable outpatient prescriptions.

(d) The number of refills authorized on a single prescription may not to exceed time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws and regulations.

(e) Consistent with Pennsylvania state law and aligned with contiguous states where our patient population resides, prior to each instance and no greater than 7 days of prescribing an opioid or a benzodiazepine, an appropriate state PDMP query must be performed and documented in the patient medical record, utilizing the standard PDMP note title.

v) Domiciliary Care Medication Orders:

(a) All prescriptions must be entered electronically.

(b) Controlled substances are limited to a time frame in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws and regulations supply.

(c) time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws and regulations is the maximum duration for Domiciliary Care prescriptions

vi) Transfer of Patients: When a patient is transferred from one level of care to another level of care, or there is a change in attending of record, orders must be written for the new level of care. Where a patient is transferred from one nursing unit to another but remains
under the care of the same attending, the existing orders remain valid.

C. **Standardized Order Sets** (protocols): An order set is a template of orders used by providers in a specific clinical area. An order set can be individualized for each patient and must be signed by the provider before the orders can be implemented. Standardized order sets are reviewed periodically by Section Chief or Service Line Vice President and modified as needed. All standardized order sets in the EMR/medical record shall be authenticated by a Medical Staff member and are to be signed for each usage by medical staff. All concerned personnel shall be notified of revisions to standardized order sets by the Section Chief or Service Line Vice President.

D. **Investigational Drugs**: Investigational drugs will be used only when approved by the appropriate Research and Development Committee and the P&T Committee and administered under approved protocol with patient informed consent, under the direct supervision and legitimate order of the authorized Principal Investigator or designated investigator.

E. **Informed Consent**:
   i) Informed consent will be consistent with legal requirements and ethical standards, as described in Facility policy Informed Consent.
   
   ii) Evidence of receipt of Informed consent, documented in the medical record, is necessary in the medical record before procedures or treatment for which it is required.
   
   iii) Surgical, invasive and non-invasive procedures, operative blood transfusions and anesthesia will be initiated only with the prior, informed and voluntary consent of the patient. Informed consent will include a full explanation of the risks, benefits and alternatives of therapy with the patient.
   
   iv) The following elements are to be addressed during informed consent and documented in the patient’s medical record by the practitioner who obtained the consent:
      (a) Relevant aspects of the proposed procedure/treatment;
      (b) Indications for the procedure/treatment;
      (c) Reasonable foreseeable risks;
      (d) Potential complications or site efforts;
      (e) Expected benefits;
      (f) Reasonable and available alternative therapies; and
      (g) Anticipated outcome if the procedure/treatment is or is not performed.

Documentation in the medical record should also include a statement that the patient (or surrogate decision maker) had the opportunity to ask questions, identified their decision was made without duress or coercion.
v) Documentation of informed consent will be considered valid for a period of 60 calendar days. If treatment involves multiple visits or procedures pursuant to the authorized treatment plan obtained, the informed consent will be valid for the entire anticipated period.

vi) Consent will be obtained electronically using IMED except for administrative or phone consent or when IMED is unavailable. Obtaining consent by telephone shall be done only under circumstances when the physician has deemed it medically necessary that a patient must undergo an invasive procedure. In such a situation, the Business Service Line will follow the appropriate procedures.

vii) All patients asked to participate in a research project are to be given a full explanation of the expected benefits, potential discomforts and risks, and alternative treatments that might also be advantageous. The patient is to be informed that (s) he may refuse to participate in the research project and that refusal will not compromise their access to services.

F. Submission of Surgical Specimens: All tissues and objects removed at operation shall be sent to the Facility pathologist who shall make such examination as he may consider necessary to arrive at a pathological diagnosis.

G. Special Treatment Procedures:

i) DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) and Withholding/Withdrawal of Life Sustaining Treatment
   (a) A description of the role of the physician, family members and when applicable, other staff in decision.
   (b) Mechanisms for reaching decisions about withholding of resuscitative services, including mechanisms to resolve conflicts in decision making.
   (c) Documentation in the medical record.
   (d) Requirements are described in Facility Policy Memoranda, Medical Staff Bylaws, and these Rules.

ii) Sedation/Analgesia involves the administration of medications that have a risk for undesirable side effects, either immediately or delayed, and may be utilized only within the guidelines of an established protocol in the center policy related to Sedation/Analgesia and according to approved privileges. Only by those Practitioners with approved and current privileges to do so.

5. ROLE OF ATTENDING STAFF

A. Supervision of Residents and Non-Physicians
i) Residents are supervised by members of the Medical Staff in carrying out their patient care responsibilities. Residents participate in patient care under the direction of the active medical staff that has clinical privileges at this healthcare system. Resident supervision includes the examination of the patient, discussion of findings and therapeutic options, a plan for medical care, and documentation of those components of care. Attending physicians assigned to supervise residents must ensure that all diagnostic, therapeutic, and surgical procedures performed by residents assigned to the patient are medically indicated and properly executed; must be familiar with each patient the resident is assigned to; must enter periodic notes in the patient’s medical record (or at a minimum, authenticate the resident’s notes) and verify concurrence of diagnosis and treatment; and must review major significant revisions in treatment plans and/or changes in the patient’s level of care and note their concurrence.

ii) Transfer or discharge of a patient by a resident will be made jointly with the attending responsible for the patient’s care.

iii) Residents may enter patient care orders but this does not prohibit the medical staff from entering orders. Orders entered by residents do not require authentication by the attending.

iv) Written descriptions of the roles, responsibilities, and patient care activities of residents (resident PDs) are available on the VAPHS Education website. The descriptions identify a resident’s progressive involvement in patient care activities by Post-Graduate Year (PGY Level). Residents will be encouraged to assume increasing levels of responsibility based on the individual’s documented knowledge, skill, experience and judgment, consistent with the requirements of the accrediting body.

v) Medical staff members who choose not to participate in the teaching program are not subject to denial or limitation of privileges for this reason alone, except that this may result in loss of faculty appointment.

vi) Non-Full Practice Authority Advanced Practice Professionals and certain Associate Health Practitioners are supervised or precepted by the Medical Staff as defined by the Scope of Practice.

B. Documentation of Supervision of Resident Physicians

i) Sufficient evidence is documented in the medical record to substantiate active participation in, and supervision of, the patient’s care by the attending as described in Facility Policy Memoranda, Medical Staff Bylaws, these Rules, and VHA Handbook 1400.1 Resident Supervision.

ii) Each patient must have a supervising attending whose name is identifiable in the medical record.
iii) Evidence of attending supervision must be documented within 24 hours of admission, when there is a significant change in the patient’s condition or treatment plan, prior to any invasive procedure and at discharge.

iv) The attending must ensure that all medical records of patients assigned to residents have been appropriately completed, including the history and physical examination, operative reports, and discharge summary.

v) Entries in the medical record made by residents or those non-physicians (e.g., PAs, APNs, etc.) that require countersigning by supervisory or attending medical staff members are covered by appropriate Facility policy and include:

(a) History and physical examination.
(b) Discharge Summary.
(c) Operative Reports.
(d) Medical orders that require co-signature.
   (1) DNR.
   (2) Withdrawing or withholding life sustaining procedures.
   (3) Certification of brain death.
   (4) Research protocols.
   (5) Investigational drug usage, ONLY permitted by named principal investigators or co-investigators previously designated in the study.

(NOTE: Because medical orders in EMR do not allow a second signature (co-signature), the attending must either write the order for (1) through (5) above; or in an urgent/emergency situation, the house staff or non-physician must obtain verbal concurrence from the attending, document in the progress notes the discussion and concurrence, and can write and sign the order. The attending medical staff member must then co-sign the progress note noting the discussion and concurrence within time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations.)

vi) Residents are allowed to order laboratory studies, radiology studies, pharmaceuticals, and therapeutic procedures as part of their assigned levels of responsibility. In addition, residents are allowed to certify and re-certify treatment plans as part of their assigned levels of responsibility. These activities are considered part of the normal course of patient care and require no additional documentation on the part of the supervising Practitioner over and above standard setting-specific documentation requirements (VHA Handbook 1400 page 6).
C. Designated administrative staff will be authorized to make administrative entries as approved by the Chief of Staff. These administrative entries can be for the purposes of: (1) creating electronic forms for the inclusion into the computerized patient record system, (2) administratively closing open requests or orders, (3) entering administrative progress notes, (4) entering notes to disposition consultation requests and (5) completing other requirements as requested by the Chief of Staff or his/her designee.

(a) Each patient must have a supervising practitioner whose name is recorded in the medical record.

(b) Supervising practitioners will be available for appropriate resident supervision. Each service must provide call schedules that indicate the responsible supervising practitioners and how to contact them.

(c) Documentation of supervision will be entered into the medical record as a progress note by the supervising practitioner, or will be reflected within the resident's progress note, or other appropriate entries in the medical record that have been assigned by the supervising physician.

(d) The medical record should reflect the degree of involvement of the supervisory practitioner, either by provider's progress note or the resident's description of attending involvement.

(e) The attending may choose to countersign or add an addendum to the resident's note detailing the attending's involvement. The note will include the name of the staff practitioner with whom the case was discussed, as well as a summary of that discussion.

(f) Patients admitted to an inpatient service must be physically examined and evaluated by the supervisory practitioner and a progress note documenting this evaluation must be entered, within 24 hours of admission including weekends and holidays. The attending's note will include findings and concurrence with the resident's initial diagnosis and treatment plan, as well as any modifications or additions. Supervisory practitioners are expected to be personally involved in the ongoing care of the patients assigned to them in a manner consistent with the clinical needs of the patient and the graduated level of responsibility of the residents.

D. The discharge or transfer of the patient from an inpatient service must include documentation of physical activity medications, diet, functional status and follow up plans. At a minimum, evidence of this will be documented by Resident Supervision Requirements in Special Areas

i) Inpatient Care
(a) The supervising practitioner's countersignature of the discharge summary or discharge note.

ii) Outpatient Care

(a) The supervising practitioner must be physically present in the clinic area during clinic hours.

(b) Each new patient to the outpatient clinic, for which the supervising practitioner is responsible, should be seen by or discussed with the supervising practitioner. This must be documented via a progress note by the supervising practitioner, or the resident's note, and include the name of the supervising MD and nature of discussion.

(c) The supervising practitioner must be identifiable for each resident's patient care encounter. Return patients to clinic must be seen by or discussed with the supervising provider at such a frequency as to ensure the course of treatment is effective and appropriate. Documentation must be entered by the supervising provider or resident and indicate the nature of the discussion with the supervising provider. The attending may choose to countersign and add an addendum to the resident note detailing the attending's involvement.

(d) The supervising practitioner, in consultation with the resident, ensures that the discharge of the patient from clinic is appropriate.

iii) Consultative Care

(a) The supervising practitioner is responsible for consultations and must meet with each patient consulted by a resident and perform a personal evaluation in a timely manner.

(b) Supervising practitioner must document consultation by entering a progress note or by concurrence with the resident's consultation note.

(c) The attending may choose to countersign and add an addendum to the resident's note detailing the attending's involvement.

iv) Operating Room Procedures/Same Day Surgical Procedures

(a) For all elective or scheduled surgical procedures, a supervising practitioner will evaluate and write a pre-procedure note describing the findings, diagnosis, plan for treatment, and/or choice of specific procedures to be performed. This pre-procedural evaluation and note may be done up to 30 days in advance of the surgical procedure and a reassessment and update documenting any changes in
the patient’s condition must be completed within 24 hours prior to surgery.

(b) Before starting a procedure, the site will be marked and a ‘time-out’ with the entire team must be done. A time-out is part of the universal protocol for preventing surgery of the wrong site, wrong procedure, or wrong person.

(c) During the procedure, the supervising practitioner will provide an appropriate level of supervision based on the level of training of the involved resident and the complexity of the procedure.

(d) Operative reports must be dictated after the procedure and an operative progress note must be entered immediately into the medical record.

(e) Staff involvement in operating room procedures will be documented in the computerized surgical log (part of the VISTA Surgical Package). The service chief is responsible for periodically reviewing cases done to ensure that the level of supervision is appropriate.

v) Non OR Procedure

(a) Routine bedside and clinic procedures include: skin biopsies, central and peripheral lines, lumbar punctures, centesis and incision and drainage. Supervision for these activities is dependent upon the setting in which they occur.

(b) Non-routine, non-bedside, diagnostic, or therapeutic procedures (i.e., endoscopy, cardiac catheterization, invasive / radiology chemotherapy, radiation therapy) are procedures that require a high level of expertise in their performance and interpretation. Although gaining experience in doing such procedures is an integral part of the education of the resident, such procedures may be done only by residents with the required knowledge, skill, and judgment and under an appropriate level of supervision by a supervising practitioner. Supervising practitioners are responsible for authorizing the performance of such procedures and must be physically present in the procedural area.

vi) Emergency Department

(a) The supervising practitioner for the Emergency Department must be physically present in the Emergency Department.

(b) Each new patient to the Emergency Department must be seen or discharged with the supervising practitioner.
(c) The supervising practitioner, in consultation with the resident, ensures that the discharge of the patient from the Emergency Department is appropriate.

(d) A supervising practitioner is responsible for clinical consultations from each specialty service. When residents are involved in consultation services, the supervising practitioner is responsible for supervision of these residents.

vii) Emergency Situations: In an emergency, the resident will be permitted to do everything possible to save the life of a patient or save a patient from serious harm but the supervising practitioner must be contacted and apprised of the situation as soon as possible. The resident must document the nature of that discussion in the patient’s record.

6. MEDICAL RECORDS
A. Basic Administrative Requirements:
   i) Complete, accurate and timely documentation in a patient’s medical record is a medical and legal responsibility of the Medical Staff. All sensitive patient information must be appropriately protected.

   ii) Entries must be electronically entered where possible, which automatically dates, times, authenticates with method to identify author, may include written signatures.

   iii) It is the responsibility of the medical Practitioner to authenticate and, as appropriate, co-sign or authenticate notes by Non Full Practice Authority Advanced Practice Professionals.

   iv) Final diagnosis and complications are recorded without use of abbreviations and symbols. A list of abbreviations not to use can be found in related Facility policy, and is available in CPRS and VISTA. Those abbreviations are not acceptable for use either handwritten or in the EMR.

   v) The attending will be held responsible for the completion of the medical record for each patient. Documentation is to be entered the same day as the encounter and signed within 24 hours of the encounter. The time requirement for completion of reports of diagnostic and therapeutic procedures is within 24 hours. If dictated, documentation is to be signed within 3 workdays after being uploaded into VISTA. Discharge summaries are to be dictated prior to the patient leaving the healthcare system. All medical record documents are to be fully completed within 30 days of discharge. The Service Line VP or Section Chief may authenticate documentation by other staff if that staff member will not be able to timely sign off. Automatic administrative privilege suspension will be triggered by 10 or more unsigned or un-
cosigned notes > 30 days and/or 20 or more unsigned orders > 30 days.

vi) Under unusual circumstances the Chief of Staff and Director may authorize signature by means of a rubber stamp. A signed statement is required by the physician to the effect that he/she is the only one in possession of the rubber stamp and is the only one who will use it.

vii) Medical Students can enter H&P’s, notes, consults, and discharge summaries into the patient’s medical record, however, all entries must be signed by the supervising resident or attending. Progress notes entered by medical students should be entered under the title of “Medical Student Notes”. H&P’s, consults, and discharge summaries are to be accompanied by an addendum or a separate note from the attending to qualify for billing purposes.

viii) Release of information is required per policy and standard operating procedures for the Facility.

ix) All medical records are confidential and the property of the Facility and shall not be removed from the premises without permission (ROI from the Patient/consultation with the privacy officer as appropriate). Medical records may be removed from the Facility's jurisdiction and safekeeping only in accordance with a court order, subpoena, or statute. In case of readmission of a patient, all previous records on file shall be available for the use of Medical Staff.

x) Access to medical records of all patients shall be afforded to Medical Staff members for bona fide study and research, consistent with preserving patient confidentiality and privacy. Specific confidentiality requirements are found in Title 38 U.S.C. 7332.

B. All Medical Records must contain:

i) Patient identification (name, social security number, address, DOB, next of kin).

ii) Medical history including history and details of present illness/injury.

iii) Observations, including results of therapy.

iv) Diagnostic and therapeutic orders.

v) Observations, mental status, etc., including results of therapy and treatment plan.

vi) Reports of procedures, X-rays, tests, etc. and their results.

vii) Progress notes: Dated and timed progress notes will provide a chronological record, pertinent clinical observations and interventions document progress toward achieving goals identified in the care plan and identify plans for discharge.
viii) Consultation reports.
ix) Diagnostic impressions.
x) Conclusions at termination of evaluation/treatment and the patient’s condition on discharge and planned follow up.
xi) Informed consent before procedures or treatments undertaken and if not obtainable, the reason, as stated in Facility Policy Memorandum "Informed Consent."
xii) Death note and autopsy, if appropriate.

C. **Inpatient Medical Records:** In addition the items listed in section B above, all inpatient records must contain, at a minimum:

i) A history that includes chief complaint, history of present illnesses, childhood illnesses, adult illnesses, operations, injuries, medications, allergies and adverse reactions, social history (including occupation, military history, and habits such as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs), family history, chief complaint, and review of systems including vital signs (temperature, pulse, respirations, blood pressure and pain assessment). The HIMSTeam will monitor the quality of medical histories and physical examinations. Any deficiencies will be addressed with the Medical Staff for follow-up.

ii) A complete physical examination includes (but not limited to) general appearance, review of body systems, including vital signs (temperature, pulse, respirations, blood pressure and pain assessment), nutritional status, ambulation, self-care, mentation, social, review of the results of pertinent studies which includes but not limited to, laboratory, radiology tests, and other applicable findings based on the patient assessed personal history. Key examination medical impressions and conclusions will be documented in the note and the planned course of action. The note must be authenticated by provider at the earliest possible time, but always within time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws and regulations of being written in CPRS. A Service Line Vice President and/or Section Chief may authenticate (sign) for another Licensed Independent Provider if the Vice President or Section Chief believes doing so is in the patient’s best interests or if the author of the note will not be able to sign the note timely, as in the case of dictation.

(a) If the H&P was completed prior to the admission or procedure, it must be updated the day of admission. If it is more than, time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations a new one must be completed.

(b) Inpatient H&P must be completed within 24 hours of acute care admission, within 72 hours of CLC admission, and within 7 days of domiciliary admission, in accordance with
VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations of the Community Living Center (CLC) and the Domiciliary.

iii) A discharge plan (from any inpatient admission or Domiciliary), including condition on discharge.

iv) Have a discharge summary (from inpatient or Domiciliary) signed and available for review in CPRS within time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations of discharge from the inpatient setting and time frames in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations for CLC residents.

v) Discharge summary must be completed within 24 hours of acute care discharge (or death), within 72 hours of CLC discharge (or death), and within 24 hours of domiciliary discharge (or death), in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and regulations days of discharge.

vi) When the patient is readmitted within 30 days for the same or a related problem, an update to the H&P may be used, provided documentation of the original exam is readily available. [An H&P performed within 30 days of admission may be used but an update is required at the time of admission.] Documentation of an update to the original H&P must include an appropriate assessment on admission confirming the necessity for the procedure or case is still present, the patient’s condition has not changed since the H&P was originally completed, or any changes are documented.

vii) Dentists and podiatrists are responsible for the portion of the patients' history and physical examination that relates to their area of practice. A physician is responsible for completion of the remainder of the history and physical examination. H&P’s performed by a non-FPANP or physician assistant in Interdisciplinary Medical Perioperative Assessment Consultation and Treatment (IMPACT) will be co-signed by the physician. The physician in IMPACT will approve or disapprove the medical clearance for podiatric or oral surgery.

viii) A history and physical examination will be performed on each outpatient by the primary care provider during patient enrollment/re-enrollment. The patient will be given an annual physical or, as applicable, or assessment of the condition for which care is authorized. The examining provider must determine the comprehensiveness of the exam based upon the age, sex and previous and current status of the patient.

ix) A history and physical examination must be in the record prior to any surgical procedure for inpatients and those that will be admitted post-operatively. The medical history shall contain appropriate clinical information relating to the chief or presenting complaint, the
history of the acute medical illness determined by the chief complaint, and clinically relevant information regarding the past medical history, social history, family history and review of systems. The physical examination will include the vital signs and elements of an organized examination of the organ system(s) involved in the surgical disease process and general examination of other key organ systems.

x) In the case of procedures performed on an outpatient basis, including those returning to Same Day Surgery, an abbreviated history and physical will be documented. This must include a relevant review of systems, allergies and medication review. In all instances, an assessment of the case will be recorded documenting the indication(s) for surgery.

xi) The history will note the clinical problem briefly and the indication for the procedure. Significant medical co-morbidities such as heart disease, diabetes hypertension or malignancy should be mentioned. The physical examination should include basic physical findings of the major organ systems: the lungs, heart, and abdomen and areas of the body being addressed by the procedure. If undergoing general anesthesia or moderate sedation as part of the same day procedure, a cardiopulmonary exam may be completed as a portion of the anesthesia pre-operative assessment.

xii) Surgical specialties (including podiatry) may refer operative candidates to Interdisciplinary Medical Perioperative Assessment Consultation and Treatment (IMPACT). IMPACT will conduct a history and physical examination and a medical evaluation of co-morbidities for risk stratification. H&P’s performed by an advance practice nurse or physician assistant in IMPACT will be co-signed by the physician. The physician in IMPACT will approve or disapprove the medical risk assessment as conducted by an advance practice nurse or physician assistant. IMPACT will facilitate surgical decision-making regarding the risk to benefit ratio of surgery and will recommend peri-operative management for medical co-morbidities.

xiii) The pre-procedure note may serve as the history and physical for invasive procedure areas as long as all required components are addressed.

D. Outpatient Medical Records: In addition the items listed in section B above, all outpatient records must contain, at a minimum:

i) A progress note for each visit including telephone contacts and will be entitled with the name of the clinic.
ii) Relevant history of illness or injury and physical findings including vital signs.

iii) Patient disposition and instruction for follow-up care.

iv) Immunization status, as appropriate.

v) Allergies.

vi) Referrals and communications to other providers.

vii) List of significant past and current diagnoses, conditions, procedures, drug allergies,

viii) Medication reconciliation, problem, and any applicable procedure and operations on the Problem List.

E. Emergency Department Medical Records: In addition the items listed in section B and D above, all outpatient records must contain, at a minimum:

i) The time and means of arrival

ii) Care received prior to arrival

iii) Disposition at discharge

iv) Information regarding an Against Medical Advice (AMA) event, if applicable

v) Discharge instruction sheet is patient is not admitted

F. Surgeries and Other Procedures:

i) All aspects of a surgical patient’s care, including ambulatory surgery, pre-operative, operative and post-operative care, must be documented. Surgical interventions, diagnostic procedures, or other invasive procedures must be documented to the degree of specificity needed to support any associated coding data and to provide continuity of care.

ii) Preoperative Documentation:

(a) In all cases of elective and/or scheduled major surgery and/or diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, and if circumstances permit, in cases of emergency surgery, the supervising or staff Practitioner must evaluate the patient and write a pre-operative (pre-procedural) note describing: the findings of the evaluation, diagnosis(es), treatment plan and/or choice of specific procedure to be performed; discussion with the patient and family of risks, benefits, potential complications; and alternatives to planned surgery and signed consent

(b) Invasive procedures and surgeries involving no more than local anesthesia require a focused history and physical or Subjective/Objective/Assessment/Plan (SOAP) note
addressing pertinent positive/negative information, indications for the procedure, known risks related to the procedure, and a physical exam pertinent to the procedure. A formal consultation to the service for performing the procedure that includes all required content will serve as an H&P if done within 30 days in accordance with VHA Policy, State laws, and The Joint Commission’s regulations, but it must be updated within 24 hours of the procedure.

(c) Except in an emergency, no patient may go to the operating room without a complete history and physical examination recorded in his/her chart plus recorded results of lab work and x-rays.

(d) A surgical operation shall be performed only with documented informed consent of the patient or his/her legal representative except in emergencies. Whenever, due to the emergency exception, a treatment or procedure that requires signature consent has been provided without obtaining the patient’s or surrogate’s signature consent, the Service Line Vice President, and/or designee must be notified and must review the record to verify that the emergency exception to obtaining signature consent has been appropriately applied. The Service Line Vice President and/or designee must document their review by either co-signing or writing an addendum to the progress note.

iii) Immediate Post-Operative Documentation: A post-operative progress note must be written, or directly entered into the patient’s health record, by the surgeon immediately following surgery and before the patient is transferred to the next level of care.

(a) The immediate post-operative note must include:

1. Pre-operative diagnosis,
2. Post-operative diagnosis,
3. Technical procedures used,
4. Surgeons,
5. Findings,
6. Specimens removed,
7. Blood loss, and
8. Complications.

(b) The immediate post-operative note may include other data items, such as:

1. Anesthesia,
iv) **Post-Operative Documentation**: An operative report must be completed by the operating surgeon on the same calendar day of the surgical procedure completion. The body of the report needs to contain the: indication for the procedure; operative findings; technical procedure used; specimens removed; post-operative diagnosis; names of the supervising practitioner, primary surgeon, and assistants; and the presence and/or involvement of the supervising practitioner.

v) **Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) Documentation**:
   (a) PACU documentation must include the surgeon’s pre-operative note and preoperative anesthesia evaluation, intraoperative notes and the patient evaluation on admission to, and discharge from, the post-anesthesia care unit, a time-based record of vital signs and level of consciousness (either paper or electronic), all drugs administered and their doses, type and amounts of intravenous fluids administered, including blood and blood products, any unusual events including post-anesthesia or post-procedural complications, and post-anesthesia visits.

   (b) The health record must document the name of the LIP responsible for the patient’s release from the recovery room, or clearly document the discharge criteria used to determine release.

   (c) For inpatients, there needs to be at least one documented post-anesthesia visit after leaving the post-anesthesia care unit. The note needs to describe the presence or absence of anesthesia-related complications.

   (d) For outpatients, Ambulatory Surgery personnel (i.e., a nurse) must call the patient after surgery, to assess any complications, including anesthetic complications, as appropriate.

vi) **Noncompliance with Documentation Requirements**: If any physician is consistently deficient and delinquent in completing medical record requirements, s/he will be counseled. If after counseling such deficiencies still remain, appropriate disciplinary action may be initiated.
vii) Completion of Medical Forms and Medical Statements: VA Healthcare Providers are to honor requests by patients for completion of non-VA medical forms and medical statements and are to follow procedures established by the Release of Information Department before completing non-VA medical forms and medical statements. Non-VA medical forms may include but are limited to:

(a) Family Medical Leave Act forms
(b) Life Insurance application forms
(c) Non-VA Disability Retirement forms
(d) State Workman’s Compensation forms
(e) State Driver’s License or Handicap parking forms

7. INFECTION CONTROL

A. Isolation is described in Infection Control Policy IC-012 Isolation and Standard Precautions.
B. Standard Precautions are described in Infection Control Policy IC-012 Isolation and Standard Precautions.
C. Reportable Cases are described in Infection Control Policy IC-008 Reportable Diseases to the Health Department
D. It is the responsibility of all Medical Staff to reduce the risk of healthcare-associated infections in the healthcare system. An Infection Control Manual is available which describes the usage of universal precautions, isolation, and other infection control practices within the healthcare system. The reporting of infectious diseases will be done in accordance with VHA, State and local regulations.
E. All Medical Staff are expected to comply with hand hygiene guidelines of the healthcare system.
F. Immunizations against influenza, hepatitis, etc., are accessible to all Medical Staff through Employee Health.

8. CONTINUING EDUCATION

All Medical Staff members shall participate in their own individual programs of continuing medical education (CME) in order to keep themselves informed of pertinent new developments in the diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of patient care, to refresh them in various aspects of their basic education, and to meet requirements for re-licensure. Medical Staff members are responsible to see that their own participation in continuing education programs and conferences both in and outside the Facility are documented and verifiable at the time of reappraisal and re-privileging.
9. HEALTH STATUS AND IMPAIRED PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM

The VAPHS recognizes its responsibility to identify and report professional employees who demonstrate physical, psychiatric or emotional impairment that may pose an actual or potential risk to patient safety. VAPHS recognizes its responsibility to assist impaired professionals and collaborate with available programs designed to intervene, monitor, refer to treatment, and advocate for the professional employee.

A. Where there is evidence that a physician or dentist's practice is impaired as a consequence of chemical dependence or mental or physical illness, the Chief of Staff's office will be notified. Practitioners are allowed to self-refer to a program for assistance for psychiatric, emotional, or physical problems. Assistance in the self-referral may be obtained from their Service Line Vice President or Chief of Staff.

B. In cases of known or suspected impairment due to mental illness or substance use, the Chief of Staff may request an assessment by the director of the occupational health program.

C. In cases of known or suspected impairment due to physical, psychiatric or emotional impairment, the Chief of Staff may request the Director to authorize a Special Physical Examination as authorized VA Handbook 5019, Part II, and applicable hospital policy. The Special Physical Examination will be tailored to the clinical circumstances and may involve a physical examination, imaging studies, neuropsychological testing, or other indicated measures. The fitness for duty examination will be conducted by or under the direction of the Occupational Health Program or outside medical examiner, which will assess the findings and make a recommendation on the Practitioner's fitness for duty based on such findings. If the determination is unfavorable to the Practitioner, or in cases of uncertainty, the findings will be presented to an ad hoc Physical Standards Board.

D. VA and Facility policies, responsibilities and procedures of the Employee Assistance Program and the VA Drug-Free Workplace Program are applicable for physicians, dentists, and other healthcare professionals.

E. Confidentiality of the Practitioner seeking referral or referred for assistance will be kept, except as limited by law, ethical obligation, or when the safety of a patient is threatened. In all instances, every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of the individual referred for assistance.

F. The hospital will sponsor periodic educational program regarding illness and impairment issues. Licensed independent Practitioners will be issued written information regarding illness issues at the time of initial appointment and re-appointment to the medical staff.
10. **PEER REVIEW**

A. All Medical Staff members shall participate in the facility protected peer review program established by the appropriate VHA policy.

B. All Medical Staff members will complete ongoing required training associated with the associated VHA policy.

C. Peer review and case discussion are opportunities for education and improvement of patient care. The peer review process will function to improve the delivery of health care services through a planned process to evaluate the quality of patient care, patient safety, and actual clinical performance. Cases for peer review are identified through various sources (e.g. occurrence screens, incident reports, patient complaints, etc.). An appropriate level of care will be assigned, as a result of peer review process and actions will be taken as appropriate to improve patient care or prevent a recurrence of the problem.

11. **PAIN MANAGEMENT**

All patients will be assessed for pain. Appropriate and effective pain management and education about pain will be available to all patients as part of their treatment plan. An opioid analgesic agreement should be reset to minimize risks and adverse outcomes that may be associated with opioid therapy. The agreement should outline the details and expectations for chronic opioid use that have been developed between the provider and patient. Noncompliance with the Opioid Analgesic Agreement can result in an Opioid Block and the patient will be banned from receiving opioid prescriptions from any providers within the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

12. **DISCLOSURE OF UNANTICIPATED PATIENT TREATMENT OUTCOMES AND ADVERSE EVENTS**

A. Disclosure refers to the forthright and empathetic discussion of clinically significant facts between providers and/or other VA personnel and patients or their representatives about the occurrence of an adverse event that resulted in patient harm, or could result in harm in the foreseeable future. VA recognizes two types of disclosures:

   i) Clinical Disclosure is an informal process for informing patients or their representatives of harmful adverse events related to the patient’s care. In a clinical disclosure, one/or more members of the clinical team provides factual information to the extent it is known, expresses concern for the patient’s welfare, and reassures the patient or representative that steps are being taken to investigate the situation, remedy any injury, and prevent further harm. The clinical disclosure of adverse events needs to be considered a routine part of clinical care, and needs to be made by the attending or senior practitioner, or designee.
ii) Institutional Disclosure is a more formal process that is used in cases resulting in serious injury or death, or those involving potential legal liability. In an institutional disclosure the patient or representative and any family members designated by the patient or representative are invited to meet with institutional leaders and others, as appropriate. An apology is made, and information about compensation and procedures available to request compensation is provided, when appropriate.

B. Documentation of the disclosure is to be completed in the patient’s medical record (an electronic template is available in CPRS).

13. TELEMEDICINE

A. Telemedicine involves the use of electronic communication technologies to provide or support clinical care at a distance. According to commonly accepted quality standards, the following services have been approved by the medical staff for provision via telemedicine: psychiatry consults, diabetes consults, radiology consults, and follow-up visits for sleep studies. VAPHS physicians who provide care, treatment, and services via telemedicine are to be fully credentialed and privileged to do so at the originating site (site where the patient is located at the time the service is provided through one of the following mechanisms):

i) the originating site may fully credential and privilege the practitioner;

ii) the practitioner may be privileged at the originating site using credentialing information from a Joint Commission accredited distant site; or

iii) the originating site may use the credentialing and privileging distant site if:

   (a) the distant site is Joint Commission accredited;

   (b) the practitioner is privileged at the distant site for those services to be provided at the originating site;

   (c) the originating site has evidence of an internal review of the practitioner’s performance of these privileges and sends to the distant site information that is useful to assess the practitioner’s quality of care, treatment, and services for use in privileging a performance improvement.

B. The Service Line leadership monitors contracted services by:

i) Establishing expectations for the performance of the contracted services.

ii) Communicating the expectations in writing to the provider of the contracted services

iii) Taking steps to improve contracted services that do not meet expectations.
C. When contractual agreement are renegotiated or terminated, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System will maintain the continuity of patient care.

D. Reference and contract laboratory services meet the federal regulations for clinical laboratories and maintain evidence of the same.

14. DISASTER MANAGEMENT

A Disaster Manual is available which describes the role and responsibilities of each service area in a disaster. Key personnel shall rehearse the plan for the care of mass casualties at least twice a year with thorough critiques for effectiveness.

15. NATIONAL PROVIDER IDENTIFIER

Each provider is required to have a National Provider Identifier (NPI). The following elements in the NPI database must be updated if any changes occur:

A. Name;
B. Business address and phone number;
C. Taxonomy code;
D. License number;
E. License number state code.

16. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

All Medical Staff are responsible for complying with all performance measures that are applicable to their work area. Compliance with performance measures will be reflected in the provider’s annual performance evaluation.

17. VAPHS MEMORANDA (POLICIES)

VAPHS healthcare system memorandums (policies and procedures) are considered an extension of the rules. They are available to all staff directly on the VAPHS SharePoint site, through Service Line Vice Presidents and from the office of the Chief of Staff. Policies are available to prospective staff for review upon request.

18. REQUIREMENT FOR TIME AND ATTENDANCE

Providers are responsible for scheduling planned annual leave, sick leave, or authorized absence in advance and are responsible for arranging coverage of their patients during their planned leave. The provider will review all appointments of patients scheduled during the requested period of leave and accommodate patients who must be seen. Whenever possible, patients will be rescheduled within two weeks of the original appointment date, or sooner, if clinically indicated.
19. REQUIREMENTS FOR CPR CERTIFICATION (BLS AND ACLS)
   A. VHA requires all clinically active staff to have CPR education through the American Heart Association Basic Cardiac Life Support (BLS) for Healthcare Providers as per MCM TX-022 Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Management of Other Life-Threatening Conditions. Providers exclusively practicing in telemedicine are exempt from this requirement for BLS.
   B. Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certification is a requirement for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Team Leaders, physicians in the Emergency Department, Critical Care, Telemetry, Medical Officers of the Day (MOD) at University Drive, and physicians with moderate sedation and airway management privileges. (Interventional Cardiologists; Interventional Gastroenterologists; Interventional Pulmonologists; Interventional Radiologists; Anesthesiologists and Nurse Anesthetists).
   C. BLS and ACLS recertification is required every two years.

20. REUSABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
   A. Reusable Medical Equipment (RME) is any medical equipment designed by the manufacturer to be reused for multiple patients. All personnel who are involved with the reprocessing of RME are responsible for knowing what reusable instruments, equipment, medical devices or supplies are used (inventory).
   B. All personnel who are involved with reprocessing RME are responsible to follow the local Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) drafted in accordance with the manufacturer’s written recommendation. The Chief, Sterile Processing and Infection Prevention and Control will act as consultants in reviewing standard operating procedures for processing RME. No one should be reprocessing any reusable medical equipment based on vendor’s verbal instructions alone.
   C. All personnel that are in any way involved in reprocessing of RME must have documented training in the setup, reprocessing and maintenance of specific equipment. Initial competency and validation of that competency will be done on an annual basis.
   D. All employees that have the responsibility of reprocessing reusable medical equipment can suspend the reuse of any RME if they suspect that the device was not properly cleaned, disinfected or sterilized according to the SOP and manufacturer’s guidelines.
   E. Single use (disposable) medical devices will not be reused or re-sterilized. All personnel must have an understanding of the importance in reprocessing of RME and the significant impact on our Veteran population through the risk of infectious disease.
Adopted by the Medical Staff, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Pittsburgh, PA, this 15th Day of February 2019.

RECOMMENDED

Ali F. Sonel, MD
Chief of Staff

APPROVED

Barbara Forsha, MSN, RN, ET
Interim Medical Center Director