



CNA Career Advancement Ladder

**Professional advancement commitment to excellence program
for the recognition of certified nursing assistants**

Table of contents

Section	Title	Page
I	Program information	3-4
II	Application criteria	5-12
III	Guidelines for the manager/director	13-16
IV	Guidelines for the board of review	17-19
V	Appendices & references	20-27

Section I

Program information

Purpose

The Purpose of the EMMC CNA Career Advancement/Ladder is to:

- Recognize and reward professional development among CNAs
- Improve retention of CNA's by providing opportunities for advancement
- Enhance CNA employee satisfaction
- Promote leadership
- Inspire CNAs to work at their full potential

Application Time Frame

Applications will be reviewed twice per year for the CNA ladder. The time frames are as follows:

- April 1 for May review
- October 1 for November review

Section II

Application criteria

Certified nursing assistant II and III application process overview

All regular full time and regular part time EMMC CNAs who meet eligibility requirements are encouraged to apply for advancement through the following process:

1. The advancing CNA must meet all the requirements in the CNA job description and criteria (i.e. CNA II/CNA III) of the desired level of advancement. Submit the **Letter of Intent** to your nurse manager for endorsement. This should be done well in advance (at a minimum of four weeks prior) of the April and October 1 application deadlines.
2. Upon receipt of **Statement of support** from the nurse manager, complete requirements for portfolio content.
3. Submit a professional **portfolio** to the nurse manager and obtain approval for submission a minimum of two weeks prior to final portfolio deadline.
4. Once you have reviewed the portfolio with the nurse manager and made any changes, please submit your professional portfolio to the following members of the CNA Career Ladder Team prior to deadline. Electronic submissions should be sent to: Manager of clinical education, clinical education coordinator, and associate vice president, patient care services (oversight of Clinical Education). Copies of submissions will be made and reviewed at the CNA Career Ladder Team meeting.

The professional portfolio must contain:

- a. A copy of the **Letter of intent** from the candidate to the nurse manager.
 - b. A **Statement of support** from the nurse manager.
 - c. Current professional **resume**.
 - d. Two **letters of recommendation**, which address the candidate's practice. One recommendation must be from a peer within your work group, other reference in general from other members of the care team (See Appendix E).
 - e. An **essay** from the applicant explaining why the candidate would be an outstanding CNA II or III.
 - f. Previous **peer reviews/annual performance reviews, or other applicable documents showing engagement** of CNA.
5. A checklist is available to assist in your application process (See Appendix D).

CNA II criteria – Please select two from each menu (Professional development and professional practice categories) for a total of four competencies

CNA in good standing without written discipline or above.

Professional development (Select two)

Professional development	Competency	Evidence	Page #'s (Evidence)	Awarded
1-a	Unit based committee: Must attend at least 75% of scheduled meetings as defined by roll call (roll call must include meetings canceled or no meeting held) – does not include staff meetings	Roll call proof of attendance signed by chair or designee Demonstrate committee action items impact on unit (meeting minutes)		
1-b	Certification as a trainer/technician/instructor which is above and beyond unit requirement (car seat safety, bike helmet safety, BLS instructor, Stop the bleed)	Copy of current card/certificate/competency, and verification of time spent if applying for trainer		
1-c	Enrolled in and attending classes in an academic program	Attach copy of transcript		
1-d	Trained and competent to perform responsibilities not expressly contained in the CNAs current job responsibilities: i.e. phlebotomy, EKGs	Signed, current competency		

Leadership and professional practice (Select two)

Leadership and Professional Practice	Competency	Evidence	Page #'s (Evidence)	Awarded
2-a	Provide a presentation for a minimum of 30 minutes. The CNA must develop an in-service for CNAs or other clinical group applicable to daily practice	Documentation to include attendance record and outline of presentation		
2-b	Competency day/skills day/trainer/unit champion: Provide for ongoing competency education, i.e. unit-based skills day presenter, body mechanics champion, etc.	Document competency taught, date & time involved, signature of staff member and manager's validation with signature		
2-c	Primary and substitute preceptor (students and new hires) must include: Documentation of at least last 8 preceptor shifts/dates	Document to include name of preceptee and dates; signed by preceptee and manager		
2-d	Participates in a project at manager's request or at CNAs request with approval from manager	Documentation to include outline of project and manager signature		
2-e	Professional essay (exemplar)	Two essays (exemplars)		
2-f	Unit based-team building project Requires manager signature	Provide outline/summation of project as well as attendance roster		

CNA III criteria – Select two from each category in CNA II menu (Professional development and leadership and professional practice) and one from each category (Collaboration, teamwork and community benefit & performance improvement) in the CNA III menu below (for a total of six competencies), required to obtain ten additional CEUs beyond those required per CNA job description and must be a trainer of employees or community members

CNA in good standing without written discipline or above.

Collaboration, teamwork and community benefit (Select one)

Collaboration, teamwork, and community benefit	Competency	Evidence	Page #'s (Evidence)	Awarded
3-a	Community volunteering in professional capacity	Documentation to include verification of coordination/participation efforts in at least two events within last year required		
3-b	Board member in community organization	Supply confirming documentation		
3-c	Routine participation in peer interviews (to total a minimum of eight interviews/yr.)	Supply documentation of applicant names and dates of interviews with manager signature		
3-d	Hospital based committee: Must attend at least 75% of scheduled meetings as defined by roll call (roll call must include meetings canceled or no meeting held)	Roll call proof of attendance signed by chair or designee Demonstrate how information is brought back to home unit (meeting minutes)		

3-e	Hospital sponsored program coordination, which could be community-based, hospital-wide or unit-specific, i. e. cuddler program, annex activity coordination, car seat safety program	Documentation of dates and times program offered, brief outline of program with signature of the manager		
-----	--	--	--	--

Performance improvement (Select One)

EBP and performance improvement	Competency	Evidence	Page #'s (Evidence)	Awarded
4-a	Educational tools developed or revised as part of a committee, i.e. PIP, safe pt. handling	Documentation of tool, picture of bulletin board or copy of power point to be included		
4-b	Submit two articles for CNA newsletter or nursing unit-based newsletter	Supply copy of article. Include references. Article must impact practice/process or patient experience		
4-c	Poster presentation applicable to daily practice to broader audience (outside home unit)	Work with clinical Educator. Submit photo or outline of presentation, attendance roster and location of presentation		
4-d	Develops or revises policy, guidelines or protocols as part of committee work, i.e. PIP, safe patient handling	Documentation to include copies of old and new materials with changes highlighted. Validation from committee leader		
4-e	Participate in hospital/unit-based quality data collection on performance improvement activities, i.e. PIP	Validated by manager signature		
4-f	Acts as a coordinator for performance improvement project	Validated by manager signature and summary of project		
4-g	Recipient within last three years of hospital wide or community-based award, i.e. Sunshine Award, Daisy Award, "2 Those Who Care," etc.	Copy of award letter or certificate		

Review Process

1. Interviews will be scheduled with candidates on the CNA Ladder interview day.
2. Committee reviews portfolios on same day.
3. The final recommendations of the review will be decided at this time. Decisions will be communicated in writing to the candidate and manager within three weeks of the meeting. If the team recommends advancement, it will be effective the Sunday following notification.

For changes in employment status, receipt of discipline or practice transfers

A CNA I or CNA II may transfer to another unit and maintain their current position. The CNA will validate their continued practice level by following the annual verification process.

When a CNA II or CNA III transfers to a non-clinical position and then returns to a clinical position, the previous position can be resumed so long as time periods between leaving and resuming the clinical positions was less than a year. Once transitioned back to the clinical CNA position, the CNA will validate their continued practice level by following the annual verification process. If the time period between leaving and resuming clinical positions was more than a year that CNA will assume a CNA position and will need to reapply through the initial process for career advancement.

Should the CNA II or III not meet the requirements as outlined above, their job title will be changed to the appropriate level of CNA which matches their skills. Their compensation will be adjusted accordingly.

Should the CNA II or III receive discipline in the form of a written warning or higher the nurse manager and the associate vice president will promptly investigate if this warrants regression in the career ladder.

If a CNA changes her/his employment status to less than 832 worked hours per year that CNA will maintain their advanced level; however, will continue to be required to successfully complete the annual verification process.

Yearly review of CNA II and III (Maintenance of credentials)

In order for the CNA II or III to maintain their credentials, the CNA is required to maintain their level II/III status as outlined in the tables starting on page seven on an annual basis. This

includes having no written discipline or above on file. The supporting documentation for maintaining credentials must be presented to the manager by the CNA II/III at the time of the annual evaluation (see columns entitled 'evidence'). The manager will determine if current credentials have been maintained or if there is movement in the career ladder, and proper changes made to employee status including compensation. If the manager has any questions about this process, they can contact the associate vice president, patient care services with oversight of clinical education or manager of clinical education.

Criteria for the letter of intent

The letter of intent affords the candidate the opportunity to formalize her/his intention to be recognized as a CNA with a proficient or expert practice. The letter is addressed to the candidate's nurse manager and is then forwarded as part of the portfolio to the Career Ladder Team. The points to cover in the letter of intent must include:

1. Identify your intention to be recognized as having CNA II or CNA III level of practice.
2. Request your manager's support during this process.
3. Describe how your present CNA practice reflects the requirements/responsibilities (refer to the job description for CNA available on the Intranet) of the position for which you are seeking recognition.
4. Identify your professional goals.

Section III

Guidelines for the manager/director

Guidelines for the clinical manager/director/AVP endorsement of the candidate for recognition

The following guidelines are to assist managers and with their responsibilities to assist with CNA advancement.

Responsibilities

As a manager, you will be asked to either endorse or not endorse a CNA's request for advancement and recognition (Statement of support). Endorsement reflects your decision stating the candidate meets the criteria described for the level of practice for which he or she is seeking recognition. Please review the criteria for the specific level of practice in question. The CNA ladder team will carefully review the portfolio and make a final recommendation to the applicant and you regarding advancement.

The manager will initiate a discussion with the CNA interested in advancement related to your willingness to support and endorse the CNA as an applicant. It is expected this endorsement will be given even before the CNA begins developing drafts of her/his portfolio. The applicant must include in their submitted portfolio a copy of the letter of support from the manager.

To endorse the CNA as a candidate, your role is to guide the CNA through the recognition and advancement process. The contents of the portfolio are the applicant's responsibility. You will review the portfolio for required elements and its professional presentation before the applicant submits it. Once endorsed, this CNA will be considered an active candidate and can formally move ahead in the application process. Upon completion of the review, retain a hard copy of the portfolio for the candidate's employee record.

The Portfolio

- The entire portfolio is reviewed by the CNA Ladder Team and is designed to ensure the team understands the applicant's practice. An interview will also be part of the review
- The applicant's letter of intent provides an opportunity for the candidate to guide the members of the CNA ladder Team in their review of the portfolio and allows the CNA an opportunity to give voice to her/his own assessment of practice
- The letters of reference, statement of support, and the portfolio should reflect the applicant's level of practice in all of the practice domains

outlined in the advancement criteria. Therefore, the selection of each piece of information is important in telling the whole story. Your advice and counsel are important in helping the applicant to understand the importance of all aspects of the submission as a reflection of her/his CNA practice.

Guidelines for writing resumes, letters of recommendation, exemplars and essay reference guidelines for writing a resume

A resume describes what you have achieved and how you have prepared yourself for the role you are seeking. It includes formal education and work experience beginning with your most recent experience in each area. It also provides an opportunity for you to identify any unit, division, state or professional initiatives with which you have been involved.

Some possible section headings could include:

- Professional objective
- Professional experience
- Education/honors
- Licensure/certification
- Committees
- Research/Special Projects
- Presentations
- Professional organizations
- Recent workshops/conference attended
- Community activities

When writing your professional objectives and goals or describing an initiative or job role, utilize action words below whenever possible. The following is a listing of the more common action words used in a professional format.

act as	active in	administer	allocate	analyze	approve
articulate	assimilate	assist	Assure	augment	balance
collect	communicate	consolidate	consult	contribute	control
coordinate	correct	correspond	counsel	create	coach
chair	demonstrate	design	determine	develop	direct
distribute	document	draft	delegate	effect	enact

establish	evaluate	edit	examine	follow-up	formulate
forward	generate	guided	identify	implement	improve
initiate	integrate	interface	Install	institute	interview
instruct	liaison	maintain	manage	monitor	mediate
market	optimize	oversee	operate	plan	prepare
present	produce	promote	propose	provide	persuade
recommend	recruit	report	research	resolve	review
revise	refer	schedule	Screen	secure	process
select	supervise	supply	Specify	systematize	stimulate
summarize	strengthen	test	Train	tabulate	upgrade

Guidelines for writing an exemplar

One of the options for advancement is writing two clinical narratives or exemplars. A clinical narrative is a description of a patient care situation in which you feel your intervention made a difference in patient outcome, either directly or indirectly (e.g., by helping other staff members). Your exemplar may be a clinical situation that went unusually well, an incident in which there was a breakdown (i.e., things did not go as planned), a situation that is very ordinary and typical, or a situation that you think captures the essence of what being a CNA is all about. The selection of your narrative should be guided by your intention to describe the level of practice for which you are applying and should have occurred within the previous 12 months.

Write your account as a narrative or story, rather than in analytic case study or report form. Include the following:

- The context of the incident (e.g., shift, time of day, staff resources)
- A description of what happened
- What your concerns were at the time
- What you were thinking about as it was taking place
- What you were feeling during and after the incident

Try to include actual dialogue. Please do not use the real names of patients, physicians or other staff. Clinical narratives do not have to be lengthy; 2-4 typed pages (double-spaced) are usually sufficient. However, you can take as much space as you think you need to tell the story.

You should also show what you learned from this experience by answering the following questions within the description of your clinical narrative or in a summary section at the end.

- Why was the incident significant to you?
- Why is what you did important?
- What influenced your decision-making to do certain things/take specific action?
- What courses of action were considered but not pursued?
- What happened that was unexpected?
- What new knowledge or insights were gained from this experience?

Section IV

Guidelines for the CNA ladder team

Guidelines for the CNA ladder team review

I. Preliminary Information

1. The CNA Ladder Team Review membership consists of four CNA IIs and IIIs and the nurse manager of clinical education, a nurse manager and/or the AVP of clinical education. Members represent a variety of professional practice settings within EMMC.
2. Refer to advancement ladder packet as a resource and to ensure that portfolio is complete.
3. Letters of intent are due to managers a minimum of one month prior to meeting of the CNA ladder team.
4. Portfolios are due a minimum of two weeks in advance of the scheduled review.
 - In order to avoid potential conflicts of interest, CNA Ladder Team members are discouraged from writing letters of recommendation for a candidate who is applying to that team on which team member serves.

II. Review of a Professional Portfolio

1. Each portfolio must be typed and professionally presented.
2. Review each portfolio, carefully evaluating every component, using all the clinical level criteria for the role and the criteria identified in the advancement program guidelines.
3. Prior to the interview with an applicant, the members of the review board will meet to review the candidate's portfolio and begin to develop a series of questions for the interview with the applicant.
4. Formulate questions and comments, making questions as challenging and critically stimulating as possible.
5. Identify the candidate's area of strengths and potential under each section of the job description/criteria for the desired level.
6. Narratives need to reflect the candidate's current practice and describe clinical experiences that occurred within the past twelve months.
 - The narrative is authentic and accurate
 - The story has a beginning, middle and an end. Look for areas in the story that have energy and evoke images
 - Look to understand the clinical context of the story in order to understand the CNAs judgments and decisions

- Observe how the CNA is engaged with the patient, family and the multidisciplinary team
- ‘Engagement’ refers to how the CNA is grounded in the situation, how the CNA is present and available to what's really going on?
- Look for the common meanings and practices that you know are part of the practice of CNA. How do these activities fit into the context of the story?
- How does the CNA bring meaning and understanding about this particular situation? What did he/ she learn? Why did he/ she choose this narrative?
- What is the ethical comportment of the CNA? How is he/ she managing an ethical issue?
- What is the narrative about? For example, is the story about breakdown, ethical comportment, or is it a story of transformation and the like?

III. CNA Ladder Team Review Process

1. The team will meet briefly to address any concerns or issues.
2. One half to one hour will be scheduled for each candidate to meet with the CNA ladder team, accompanied by her or his manager.
3. Each team member freely asks the questions formulated as a result of the portfolio review. The manager is also given an opportunity to speak to the candidates practice.
4. Decisions are made by group consensus.
5. The team makes a final decision after consultation, using the criteria from each domain and information gathered from the portfolios and during the interview process. Areas of strength and weakness are identified and included in the letter of acceptance or denial. The letter of acceptance or denial will be sent by the team chair/co-chair to the applicant within two weeks of the scheduled interview.

Each review has a designated person (i.e. nurse manager, associate vice president, patient care services) who can function as a consultant. If the team is challenged with an unusual situation or if the team is undecided, the consultant will function as mediator for the team.

Section V

Appendices and References

APPENDIX A

Subject: Appeals process for a denial decision made by CNA clinical ladder team

Procedure:

1. The candidate submits a written letter of request to the vice president of nursing for an appeal of the CNA ladder team's decision within two weeks of having received its written decision.
2. The candidate includes in the letter of request the reasons for requesting a re-evaluation of the team's decision. A copy of this letter will also be forwarded to one of the following representatives on the CNA ladder team: Manager, clinical education or associate vice president, patient care services with oversight of clinical education.
3. The vice president, nursing and patient care services appoints an appeals board and convenes it within two weeks of receiving a written request from the candidate.
4. The appeals board will consist of a representative from human resources, a clinical manager, and/or director/AVP (not the candidate's), and a representative from clinical education. The vice president, nursing and patient care services will appoint the members of the appeals board and act as its facilitator.
5. The vice president, nursing and patient care services will notify the candidate of the date and time of the meeting of the appeals board and invite this CNA to attend this discussion. The candidate may request one person of support (e.g., her/his clinical manager) to be present at this meeting.
6. The vice president, nursing and patient care services will also invite one or both of the following: The manager, clinical education or associate vice president, patient care services with oversight of clinical education to attend this discussion. The purpose for requesting members of the CNA ladder team to be available for this discussion is to assist with any clarification of information the appeals board may request or need.
6. Following the discussion between the candidate and the appeals board, the board will submit its recommendation to the vice president, nursing and patient care services.
7. The vice president, nursing and patient care services will make the final decision regarding the candidate's recognition. This final decision will be communicated in writing to the candidate within one week of the meeting of the appeals board.

APPENDIX B

Permission to use a copy of your portfolio

To:

From:

Date:

We would like to have an electronic copy of your portfolio on file. In order to do this, we need you to sign this permission slip. The portfolio would be used as a resource for CNAs considering promotion. There may, however, be some material that you would like to remain confidential. Please indicate on the slip below any part of the portfolio you wish to have removed. ***Please complete the items below and return them to the Clinical Education department, ext. 2222***

- ☐ A copy of the Letter of Intent from the candidate to the nurse manager
- ☐ A Statement of Support from the nurse manager
- ☐ Current professional resume
- ☐ Letter of Recommendation written by _____
- ☐ Letter of Recommendation written by _____
- ☐ An essay from the applicant explaining why the candidate would be an outstanding CNA II or III
- ☐ Previous peer reviews/annual performance reviews, or other applicable documents showing engagement of CNA

Permission to retain a copy of your portfolio

Northern Light Health has my permission to keep a copy of my portfolio on electronic file. I would like to have the following information in my portfolio removed and returned to me.

Permission to use clinical narratives, letters and supportive materials

Northern Light Health EMMC would also like your permission to share edited and/or full versions of your clinical narratives for professional initiatives or other publications sponsored by Northern Light Health.

Northern Light Health EMMC has my permission to use all or portions of my professional portfolio for future initiatives or publications sponsored by Northern Light Health.

☐ I DO ☐ I DO NOT give Northern Light Health, Division of Patient Care Services, permission to use all or portions of my professional portfolio for future initiatives or publications sponsored by Northern Light Health (nurse recognition night, future candidates, etc.).

Candidate Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Peer assessment of advanced clinical practice

Date: _____

Dear Book of Evidence Board of Review Members,

This is to certify that _____ exemplified advanced
(Name)

Nursing Practice on _____ by demonstrating the
(Date)

Following (behavior or action):

_____.

The impact of this interaction on _____ was:
(My practice or the patient)

_____.

(Observer)

APPENDIX D

CNA ladder checklist

Congratulations on your intention to advance in Professional Practice! Your application is an opportunity to demonstrate that your current level of practice is consistent with the level to which you seek advancement.

CNA Portfolio Requirements

- ☐ A copy of Letter of Intent from the candidate to the nurse manager
- ☐ Statement of Support from the nurse manager
- ☐ Current professional resume
- ☐ Two (2) letters of recommendation addressing the candidate's practice. One recommendation must be from a peer within your work group, other reference in general from other members of the care team
- ☐ An essay from the applicant explaining why the candidate would be an outstanding CNA II or III
- ☐ Previous peer reviews/annual performance reviews, or other applicable documents showing engagement of CNA
- ☐ Complete the Permission to Utilize a Copy of Your Portfolio (Appendix B)

Please contact a Review of Board member with any questions during your advancement application process.

Revised 8/21/18

APPENDIX E

CNA II/III letter of recommendation

I am recommending _____ become a CNA level II/III
based on the following (please attach additional pages if necessary):

Quality of patient care:

Examples of improving performance of self or unit:

Team work:

Compassion:

Communication skills:

Submitted by: _____ **Date:** _____

Essay References:

- Hoyt, E. (2018, August 6). *The Simplest Way to Write an essay*. Retrieved from fastweb:
<https://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/the-simplest-way-to-write-an-essay>
- Jones, T. (n.d.). *The Top 5 CNA Skills Every Caregiver Should Have*. Retrieved from
myCNAjobs.com: <https://www.mycnajobs.com/blog/the-top-5-cna-skills-every-caregiver-should-have/#.W-mfhLCWzL8>
- Livingston, K. (2012, June 25). *Guide to Writing a Basic Essay*. Retrieved from
<http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/>
- Bunting, J. (n.d.). *Writing an Essay? Here are 10 Effective Tips*. Retrieved from
<https://thewritepractice.com/writing-an-essay/>
- Peterson, D. (2018, July 3). *The Five Parts of an Essay*. Retrieved from Thoughtco.:
<https://www.thoughtco.com/steps-in-writing-an-essay-31738>