



## **BEST PRACTICE INITIATIVES**

**Submitted:** December 2004

### **Organization:**

**James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital  
13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.  
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### **Title of the Best Practice**

Innovation in Nursing Recruitment: Acute Care Internship Program  
Changing the image of nursing

### **Motivation for the Best Practice**

The current nursing shortage and limited numbers of experienced nurses seeking employment was the impetus to more aggressively pursue hiring new graduates. Novice nurses frequently require extended orientations and support. Nurse Managers and staff also expressed concerns regarding the placement of new graduate nurses to fast paced, high acuity clinical settings without adequate support.

The acute care internship program (ACIP) was developed to provide education, clinical experiences and preceptor support to enhance individual learning needs and provide as smooth transition for new nurses from a novice to expert role in our VA healthcare system and to enhance our current staffing levels.

### **Description of the Best Practice**

The goal of the program is provide clinical experiences that provide new graduate nurses opportunities to gain new skills, improve confidence and increase overall competency levels at the bedside. The program includes both didactic and clinical experiences where students chose either a medical, surgical or cardiology track for a minimum of 8 weeks or 320 hours and may require off tour rotation. The program offers new graduates a choice in selecting an area of interest in which to practice and enhances staff satisfaction. This program additionally lays the foundation for future specialty certification and creates opportunities for future career advancement.

Two master's prepared Clinical Nurse Specialists or ARNP's were identified as meeting the minimum qualifications for developing and implementing the program.

It was decided that new graduates would not be included in staffing ratios until course completion. Concerns by Nurse Managers and staff were allayed with the program design that provides extensive education and limited impact to staffing levels. Preceptors for the ACIP receive monetary incentives. The program assists in the retention of highly qualified nurses at the bedside who enjoy the preceptor/mentoring experience. The outcomes of the program are yet to be fully realized.