



# Step-Up

*Career Education and Advancement*

**Are you looking for a way to Step-Up in your career? Do you want to advance to a different job or perhaps a better job but you just don't have the time to attend class and also work! If so, then you may be the person we are looking for to participate in the Deaconess Step-Up program.**

## **What is the Deaconess Step-Up Program?**

This is a unique and limited opportunity being offered to Deaconess full-time employees (72 or more authorized hours) since the fall semester of 2002. It is intended to provide eligible employees with an opportunity to achieve advanced education, certification or licensure at accredited institutions for needed and defined positions as determined by Human Resources while working at Deaconess and receiving pay for hours spent attending class.

Periodically, the Human Resources Department will identify a selected number of health care positions that it desires to make available to eligible employees through Step-Up. These positions will traditionally require achievement of license or certification within a 1 or 2 year program at an accredited institution in the local community. (Example program which may be available to Step Up at select intervals: Nursing degree program is a 2 year process resulting in an associate or bachelors degree in nursing) Employees can apply for Step-Up and, if selected, will be paid their normal wages for the time spent in enrolled class hours/clinical hours up to a maximum of 18 hours per week. **Prior to participation in the program, employees must be accepted by an accredited program and agree to pursue course work designed to achieve the necessary licensure or accreditation.**

Managers will attempt to reasonably accommodate each employee's schedule to permit the employee to attend his/her enrolled class/clinical hours each week. The employee will continue working at Deaconess for the balance of his/her authorized hours. Upon completion of course requirements, the employee must achieve the necessary license or certification and be in good standing in order to be placed in an available position. As part of the program, the employee must sign an agreement to remain employed for their authorized hours while attending class and **agree to repay the program costs by remaining employed full time at one of the following Deaconess entities: Deaconess Hospital, Deaconess Gateway Hospital or Deaconess Cross Pointe for 3 years after the licensure or accreditation is obtained.**

Step-Up details are as follows:

### **Eligibility Requirements**

1. Employee must have worked at Deaconess for a minimum of 6 months and be in good standing with the Hospital.
2. Employee must be employed in a full-time position (72+ hours).
3. Employee must be enrolled in the school **and** show proof of verified acceptance into an accredited program and agree to pursue course work designed to achieve the necessary licensure or accreditation.

4. Employee must be a full-time student (minimum 12 hours per semester-total hours can be made up of credit hours and clinical hours) or a part time student who will be eligible to take his/her licensure/certification examination.
5. Employees must timely submit a copy of their midterm and final course grades each semester.
6. Employee's supervisor must review and approve the employee's Step-Up Application before he/she can be accepted into the program. The supervisor may withhold approval if employee fails to demonstrate the Deaconess Standards of Conduct, would not be recommended to hire in new position at Deaconess, or has Warning Notices.
7. Any employee who doesn't make satisfactory progress or is not in good standing (absence of Warning Notices and discipline while in the program; works scheduled hours; timely provides supervisor with class schedule; timely provides all required forms and documentation to Human Resources and/or supervisor) in the program will be removed from Step-Up and **will be required to repay all money owed.**
8. Employees currently pursuing licensure and certification in an approved program are eligible to participate in Step-Up.
9. Employee must attend a mandatory informational in-service for the Step-Up Program.

### **Application Process**

1. Employee must submit a timely application and be enrolled in an accredited program.
2. Employee must provide written verification from the educational institution of program acceptance.
3. Employee's immediate supervisor must also approve the application.
4. Employee submits completed Step-Up application to the Benefits Office of Human Resources a minimum of 3 weeks prior to class starting. As part of the application, the employee must submit a copy of his/her class schedule. If the class schedule is not attached, the application will not be accepted.
5. The Human Resources Department reviews all applications, conducts interviews with candidates, reviews written response to questionnaire, and selects participants based upon Deaconess staffing needs.
6. The Benefits Office notifies all applicants and their supervisor of the employee's acceptance.
7. Employees in Step-Up must reapply every semester. Application must include the manager's evaluation of "good standing."
8. All applications are subject to supervisor and Human Resources Department approval.

### **What Is Covered by Step-Up**

1. Step-Up pays the employee's base rate for course/clinical hours attended (up to 18 hours per week).
2. Books and fees are not reimbursed through Step-Up.
3. Tuition is not reimbursed through Step-Up. The student may pursue tuition reimbursement through the hospital's tuition reimbursement program.
4. Time spent driving to and from class will not be paid.
5. If an employee fails a course, they will not be paid to attend that course again.

### **Scheduling Time to Attend Classes**

1. Step-Up allows the employee to get paid to attend class/clinical. Therefore, the hours available for work equal the employee's authorized hours minus the classroom/clinical hours.
2. The employee's supervisor is responsible for reasonably accommodating the employee's school schedule so he or she can attend and the employee is responsible for adjusting his/her schedule to accommodate the needs of the work unit.

3. It may be necessary for the employee to work off-shift hours other than their normal shift(s) to get in his or her authorized hours.
4. Step-Up time will count as nonproductive time and will not count toward overtime hours or Quality Share hours. However, PTO will accrue for all paid Step-Up time.
5. Supervisors should use the following pay code: **"STU"**
6. Employees will clock out to attend class.
7. If an employee changes his or her classroom hours/schedule, then he or she must notify the Benefits Office and their supervisor and provide proof of the change. The employee's work schedule will be adjusted accordingly. STU time will not be paid during spring, summer or winter holiday break.

**Fulfilling the Agreement – READ CAREFULLY. If any information is not clearly understood, please ask for clarification.**

1. If the employee doesn't make satisfactory progress or is not in good standing in the program, (absence of Warning Notices and discipline while in the program; works scheduled hours; timely provides supervisor with class schedule; timely provides all required forms, documentation, etc. to Human Resources and/or supervisor), he or she will be removed from Step-Up and **will be required to repay all money paid by Deaconess for the employee's class attendance. Repayment via payroll deductions will automatically begin with the pay period immediately following the employee's removal from the program. PTO hours that were earned as a result of being paid Step Up hours will be deducted from the employee's PTO bank.**
2. Once the employee completes the education/training, he or she has 6 months to earn the appropriate licensure or certification. If the employee fails to earn licensure or certification, then he/she agrees to continue working on a full time basis (minimum of 72 authorized hours per pay period) in order to repay Employer through biweekly payroll deductions the full amount expended hereunder by Employer (which time period will include the aforementioned six (6) months). In this case, Deaconess is under no obligation to find a position for the employee. **If the employee reduces hours or terminates employment, he or she must repay 1/24<sup>th</sup> of the amount for each remaining month up to 2 years. That amount will be collected through payroll deduction or deducted from the employee's final paycheck. A employee's change in status to DSS is tantamount to termination for purposes of this agreement.**
3. Once an employee has completed the coursework and achieved licensure or certification, they will be eligible to interview for placement in an available full-time (72+ authorized hours) position commensurate with the employee's education/licensure/certification. This position may be on any available shift at any one of the following Deaconess entities: Deaconess Hospital, Deaconess Gateway Hospital or Deaconess Cross Pointe. Deaconess has 60 days to place the employee in a full-time position. If no full-time position is available, the employee will not be required to pay back the amount owed.
4. The amount owed equals the amount of money Deaconess paid to the employee for classroom/clinical hours. To repay the amount owed, the employee must work a full-time (72+ authorized hours) schedule in their new certified or licensed position for 3 years. **If the employee reduces hours to less than 40 per pay period or terminates employment, he or she must repay 1/36<sup>th</sup> of the amount for each remaining month up to 3 years.** That amount will be **deducted from the employee's final paycheck. Reducing hours to a DSS position is the same as terminating employment and requires immediate repayment of any outstanding amount in full.** If the employee requests and is granted a reduction of authorized hours to less than 72 but greater than or equal to 40 per pay period, then the repayment obligation date is extended until the date in time when the maximum

number of 5616 work hours is fulfilled. Hours will be calculated from the date in time when licensure is achieved.

5. If the employee fails to timely submit any required forms, paperwork, etc., they are subject to immediate discontinuance of the "STU" pay and immediately removed from the program and **will be required to repay all money owed.**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **How many people will be selected to participate in Step-Up?** The number of participants will vary depending on hospital needs and available funds.
2. **Can I take an educational leave and still participate in Step-Up?** No. You must continue working at your full-time position.
3. **What if my personal situation changes during the Step-Up Program and I am unable to continue in the program? May I "sit-out" for a semester?** Yes. If there are significant personal reasons that prevent the employee from continuous participation, or the program schedule requires you to skip a semester, the employee may, temporarily, be suspended for one semester from the program. Employee must maintain FT employment status and will not be eligible for Step Up pay during the sit out semester. Employee must receive approval from Human Resources to "sit out" for the semester. If the employee chooses to not continue in the program in the semester immediately following their "suspension," then he/she will be removed from the program and all repayment obligations will immediately apply.
4. **Are there other situations which might result in an employee "sitting out" for one semester? Yes**
  1. if employee fails a course, they may be allowed to sit out the next immediate semester in order to re-take the course; employee must maintain FT authorized hours during the sit-out semester and will not receive STU pay for that semester; employee must resume the program as scheduled in the semester following the "sit out". School dictated exceptions for failed courses will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
  2. upon receipt of first warning notice for any incident including attendance, employee will "sit out" for the next immediate semester while maintaining FT employment and FT student status without receiving STU pay.
5. **Where do the funds for the Step-Up Program come from?** The funds are currently being provided by the Human Resources Department.
6. **What if the employee is unable to complete the program but defaults on repayment of funds to Deaconess?** If employee defaults on repayment of funds to Deaconess, the account is forwarded to a collection agency which forwards all information to the three national credit bureaus. This can significantly impact the employee's credit rating when applying for loans, financial assistance, etc.



# Application & Agreement

**Eligibility Requirements:** By signing below you agree to the following:

- You must have worked at Deaconess for a minimum of 6 months and be in good standing in your current position.
- You must be employed in a full-time position (72+ hours) and agree to remain employed full-time while attending class.
- You must be enrolled in the school **and** show proof of verified acceptance into an accredited program.
- You must be a full-time student (minimum 12 hours per semester – total hours can be made up of credit hours and clinical hours) in an accredited program and agree to pursue applicable course work necessary to achieve the licensure or accreditation.
- You must submit a copy of your class schedule with the application each semester.**
- You must submit written proof of acceptance into the program with the initial application.**
- You must submit with the initial application a written response to the questionnaire on the next page.**
- You agree to make satisfactory progress toward the licensure/certification program and remain in good standing.
- When placed in a position consistent with your certification/licensure, you agree to remain employed at one of the following Deaconess entities: Deaconess Hospital, Deaconess Gateway Hospital or Deaconess Cross Pointe in a full-time position (72+ hours) for three (3) years after obtaining the licensure or certification.
- If you reduce authorized hours or terminate employment, you agree to the repayment terms as stated in the Step-Up policy.**

**ALL INFORMATION MUST BE COMPLETED EACH SEMESTER FOR APPLICATION TO BE ACCEPTED:**

Name:		License/Certification Pursuing:	Employee No.:
Department:			Hire Date:
Job Title:			Shift:
School:		School Phone Number:	
Home Address (Street, City, State, Zip):			Home Phone No.:
Email address:			Cell Phone No.:
<b>Total Hrs Required for License or Certification:</b>		<b>Total Credit Hrs Completed:</b>	<b>Hrs enrolled this semester (FT status required):</b>
Session (fall, spring, etc.) / Year:			Expected date of program completion/graduation: (Month / Year)

This Agreement shall not constitute a contract, guarantee or obligation by Deaconess to employee in any full or part-time position at Deaconess I or employment for any specific length of time, it being understood by employee that any employment by Deaconess is “at will” and terminable at any time by either party, with or without cause; provided, however, employee understands that all of Deaconess’s policies and procedures, work rules and practices are applicable to employee and employee agrees to comply therewith. Employee understands and agrees that he/she is subject to all disciplinary policies and procedures, up to and including termination by Deaconess

**Acknowledgment and Signature:** My signature below signifies that I have read the Step-Up policy and that I understand the information and agree to abide by the policy. I certify that the information listed above is accurate. **I agree that any outstanding amounts due to Deaconess under the Step-Up policy are to be withheld from my last payroll check and that I am obligated to repay any additional outstanding amounts.**

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Return completed application and all supporting documentation to Dana Comer in the Benefits Section of Human Resources.



**To the Step Up Candidate upon initial application into the program:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Initial Step Up application semester / year: \_\_\_\_\_

In order to complete the application process, please submit a written response in essay format to the questions below. Response should be submitted at the same time as the application.

1. Why are you applying for admittance into the Step Up Program?
2. What do you hope to gain from your participation in the program?
3. How will the program benefit you during your college courses?
4. Upon completion of the program, in what department(s) in the hospital are you interested in working?
5. Why does this area(s) interest you?

Please note that after your complete application is received and reviewed, candidates will be contacted to schedule an interview with the Step Up selection committee.



# Supervisor Approval Form

## REQUIRED EACH SEMESTER FOR EMPLOYEE TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR PROGRAM

I have been informed that \_\_\_\_\_ has applied for the Deaconess Step-Up Program for the spring / fall (circle one) semester \_\_\_\_\_ year and is pursuing licensure/certification as a \_\_\_\_\_. As the supervisor/manager of this employee, I am providing the following information:

**Please rate all categories.** Use a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Unsatisfactory, 5 = Excellent) to rate the student on the following:

- |                              |                        |                             |                             |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| _____ Attendance/Punctuality | _____ Patient Advocacy | _____ Organizational Skills | _____ Relationship w/others |
| _____ Maturity               | _____ Nursing Judgment | _____ Integrity             | _____ Quality of Work       |
| _____ Initiative             | _____ Attitude         | _____ Bedside Manner        | _____ Communication         |
| _____ Quality of Work        | _____ Teamwork         | _____ Cooperation           | _____ Critical Thinking     |

**Comments/Strengths/Weaknesses:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Based upon this employee’s performance, attitude and demonstrated support of the Deaconess Standards of Conduct, I recommend this employee for 1<sup>st</sup> semester acceptance / 2<sup>nd</sup> semester and forward continuation in the Step Up Program:**  Yes  No

**Based upon this employee’s performance, attitude and demonstrated support of the Deaconess Standards of Conduct, if this employee achieves the above licensure/certification, I will hire in my department:**  Yes  No

**If I am not willing/unable to hire in my department, I would recommend the employee for the following department(s):**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**This decision is based on the following information/explanation:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional comments/information** that may be appropriate for considering this employee’s application for the Step-Up Program. \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor/Manager Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor – Please return this completed form to Dana Comer – Human Resources Benefit Office

August 2010 Form