STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

BEACON AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

As the leader in acute and critical care nursing, AACN developed the Beacon Award in 2003 to provide hospitals and healthcare systems a way to respond to increasing concerns about quality and safety, and to evaluate the continuing evolution of clinical care. Eleven years ago, the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM’s) *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System* called attention to the cost of preventable medical errors and patient safety. This seminal report intensified focus on outcomes among payors and led to the development of other national efforts, including the Leapfrog Group for Patient Safety, an advocacy organization. Beacon Award units meet or exceed rigid quality standards based on proven indicators of excellence that closely align with the Baldrige National Quality Award, Magnet Recognition Program, National Quality Forum Safe Practices for Better Healthcare and the AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments. Since 2003, 315 units in 40 states have received a Beacon Award from a universe of nearly 6,000 intensive care units in the U.S.

WHY BEACON

Among our community of nurses, we talk often about excellence as part of a daily commitment to our practice, patients and profession. On a personal level, aspiring for excellence takes us down many paths, whether it’s continuing education, professional development, certification or improved work-life balance. In healthcare organizations, excellence is the sum of many complex parts. The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) created the Beacon Award for Excellence (Beacon Award) to recognize individual units that distinguish themselves by improving every facet of patient care.

- Influence and Recognition
- Credibility
- Recruitment and Retention

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

For patients and families: Improved outcomes and greater overall satisfaction
For nurses: a positive, supportive work environment with greater collaboration, higher morale, and lower turnover.
For the unit: attracts quality employees and helps reduce staff turnover.

HOW

To receive the Beacon Award, a unit must meet criteria in six categories:
- Leadership Structures and Systems
- Appropriate Staffing and Staff Engagement
- Effective Communication
- Knowledge Management and Best Practices
- Evidence-Based Practice and Processes
- Patient Outcomes

EVALUATION

Process are the methods the unit uses and improves to address each criteria: approach, application, learning. Results refer to patient outcomes: current levels of performance, trends, and comparison to local and national benchmarks.