

**Consideration of Survey Visit Report and Change of Approval Status  
Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas  
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the report of a survey visit to Fortis Institute Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas in response to recent student complaints.

**Historical Perspective:**

- The VN Education Program at Fortis Institute, Grand Prairie was granted initial approval at the October 2009 Texas Board of Nursing (Board or BON) meeting.
- At the time of Board approval, the name of the program was MedVance Institute VN Education Program.
- The name was subsequently changed to Fortis Institute VN Education Program in 2011 following a transfer in administrative control from Kirchner Investment Management Corporation to Educational Affiliates, Inc.
- The program enrolled an initial cohort of sixteen (16) students in October 2010.
- Significant attrition occurred, and of the sixteen (16) students in the initial cohort, six (6) completed the program, graduating in September 2011.
- The 2011 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate is 83.33%, as five (5) of the six (6) first-time test takers passed the licensure examination.
- Educational Affiliates, Inc., a proprietary institution headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, has fifty-one (51) schools and colleges located in seventeen (17) states, including seventeen (17) VN programs; seventeen (17) associate degree nursing (ADN) programs; three (3) baccalaureate (BSN) nursing programs; and three (3) RN-BSN programs.
- Fortis Institute, Grand Prairie offers six (6) programs in addition to the VN program: medical assistant; medical billing and coding; medical office administration; radiologic technology; sterile processing technician; and surgical technology.
- The Fortis Institute VN Education Program is approved by the Texas Workforce Commission and was accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools in July 2011.
- Data from the Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS) indicate that the program of study includes 572 hours in didactic instruction, 204 hours in skills lab experiences, 158 hours in simulation lab, 4 hours in computer lab, and 474 hours in patient care situations (faculty-supervised direct patient care, observation, and clinical pre- and post-conferences).
- NEPIS data indicate that sixteen (16) students were admitted to the VN program in October 2010, and 16 students were admitted in May 2011. According to the VN program director, eighteen (18) students are currently enrolled in the program.
- Beginning in February 2012, Board Staff received several lengthy and detailed verbal and written complaints about the program from students. The majority of complaints centered on issues not under BON purview including faculty rudeness and dismissive treatment from the program director and

administration. However, some complaints suggested inappropriate and unprofessional faculty conduct.

- Board Staff reported to the program director that complaints had been received.
- Board Staff further advised the program director that, although the 2011 NCLEX-PN® pass rate is 83.33% for the six (6) students who tested during the examination year, this may not represent an adequate sample of the program's performance for a change in approval status from initial to full approval. The director was informed that a survey visit would be made, and a response to the student complaints would be expected at the time of the visit.
- Board Staff conducted a survey visit to Fortis Institute, Grand Prairie on March 16, 2012.

#### **Pertinent Findings from Survey Visit:**

##### Findings Related to Administration:

- Board staff met with the Regional Director of Operations for Fortis Institute, Mr. Sidney Carey; National Dean for Academics, Accreditation, and Evaluation and Regional Dean for Arizona and Texas, Esperanza Villanueva-Joyce, EdD, CNS, RN; and the Director of the VN Program, Mishaun Jackson, BSN, MHA, RN.
- Ms. Jackson was approved as VN Program Director in July 2010.
- Administration voiced support of Ms. Jackson and a commitment to the success of the VN program.

##### Findings Related to Faculty:

- Two (2) full-time and two (2) substitute "PRN" faculty teach in the VN program.
- Significant faculty turnover has occurred in the VN program. The current faculty have been employed for a period of time ranging from one (1) month to eight (8) months.
- The VN program director reported difficulty hiring qualified faculty due to non-competitive salaries.
- The director reported that she has utilized a nurse staffing agency to fill faculty positions in the past. Two (2) of the four (4) faculty currently teaching in the program were recruited from a staffing agency.
- According to the program director, funds are available for faculty development as well as tuition reimbursement opportunities.
- Two (2) full-time and one (1) substitute faculty were interviewed.
- Two (2) faculty interviewed were recruited from a staffing agency and have been with the program for approximately one (1) month. Both reported that they had not received a formal orientation.
- One (1) faculty has been with the program for eight (8) months, and reported receiving an orientation from the national nursing director.
- Faculty reported their workload is very heavy and prohibits them from having adequate time to prepare lesson plans and grade papers.

##### Findings Related to Students:

- The program director cited academic failures and personal issues as the reasons for the high attrition rate, and she said there are plans to increase the rigor of the admission criteria.
- Board staff met with fourteen (14) students from the second and fourth levels. Eighteen (18) students are enrolled in the program.

- Students stated that they have little or no input into the governance of the nursing program.
- Students reported inconsistency in their evaluations by faculty for didactic and clinical course work.
- Students complained that they do not receive grades and instructor feedback in a timely manner.
- Students voiced concerns about being inadequately prepared for clinical practice upon graduation because all clinical learning experiences occur in long-term care facilities. The program does not provide faculty supervised hands-on patient care experiences in acute care, pediatrics, or obstetrics.
- Students reported that while the program has high-fidelity simulation capabilities, the faculty are not trained in the proper use of simulation.
- Students complained of a lack of supplies available to them for practice as well as skills competency validation in the nursing lab.
- Students complained that library holdings were insufficient. Second level students reported that they were not informed of the virtual library available to them. Fourth level students reported receiving an orientation to the virtual library upon admission by the school librarian. However, the librarian is no longer with the program and the position is currently vacant.
- Students related incidences of inappropriate and unprofessional faculty conduct.
- Students identified one (1) instructor as being helpful.
- Students reported that the program director and administration were dismissive regarding the aforementioned student grievances.
- Students expressed fear of retaliation from Fortis Institute administration for voicing complaints.

#### Findings Related to Clinical Learning Experiences:

- All direct patient care clinical learning experiences take place in long-term care facilities.
- The program director reported being unsuccessful in efforts to obtain clinical experiences in acute care, pediatric, and obstetric settings. A limited number of observation experiences do take place in various clinics and day care facilities.
- The director reported utilizing simulation in lieu of hands-on patient care clinical learning experiences. However, she further stated that the faculty member trained in simulation was no longer with the program and current faculty are not trained in the use of simulation.

#### Findings Related to Facilities, Resources and Services:

- The facilities are modern and spacious. Classrooms, simulation labs, and skills labs are well equipped.
- The nursing program shares two (2) receptionists with the other six (6) programs on the campus. However, the program director stated that there are plans to recruit a part-time receptionist that will be dedicated to the VN program.
- The school librarian position is currently vacant.
- The VN program director is required to teach sixteen (16) hours per week in the classroom.

Pros:

- The program has met the Board's NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate requirement with a 2011 pass rate of 83.33% on the licensure examination.
- The program director and administration were responsive to Board Staff's findings, and expressed a commitment to take all corrective actions necessary to come into compliance with Rule 214.

Cons:

- The program has not secured adequate clinical learning experiences for the students currently enrolled in the program.
- Faculty have not been prepared for clinical simulation.
- Frequent faculty turn-over has contributed to a lack of stability in the nursing program.
- Current faculty are newly hired and inexperienced in prelicensure nursing education.
- The program has not provided adequate orientation for newly hired faculty.
- Resources are not in place to support the VN program as evidenced by:
  - inadequate clerical support;
  - inadequate instructional personnel;
  - inadequate student support services; and
  - inadequate supplies available to students for nursing skills lab practice.
- The attrition rate for the initial cohort is over 60%, with six (6) of sixteen (16) students completing the program.

**Background for Recommendation:**

Rule 214.4(a)(3) sets forth the parameters of full or initial approval with warning status as follows:

*(3) Full or initial approval with warning is issued by the Board to a vocational nursing educational program that is not meeting legal and educational requirements.*

*(A) A program issued a warning will receive written notification from the Board of the warning.*

*(B) The program is given a list of the deficiencies and a specified time in which to correct the deficiencies.*

**Staff Recommendation:**

Move to accept the survey visit report, change the approval status of the Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program from initial to initial with warning, issue the requirements in the attached letter (See Attachment #1), and schedule a follow-up survey visit in Fall 2012.

**DRAFT LETTER**

April 26, 2012

Mishaun Jackson, MHA, BSN, RN, Director  
Vocational Nursing Education Program  
Fortis Institute  
401 East Palace Parkway, Suite 100  
Grand Prairie, Texas 75050

Dear Ms Jackson:

At the April 19-20, 2012 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the findings of the March 16, 2012 survey visit and implications to the approval status of the Fortis Institute Vocational Nursing Education Program. The Board wishes to thank you and ..... for being present at the meeting to answer questions.

Based upon the discussion and review of documents, it was the decision of the Board to:

1. accept the survey report of March 16, 2012;
2. change the approval status of Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program from initial approval to initial with warning;
3. authorize staff to conduct a survey visit in Fall 2012 to evaluate the effectiveness of changes and strategies of the administration and faculty to correct deficiencies in compliance with Rule 214; and
4. issue the following requirements:

**REQUIREMENTS:**

**Requirement #1:**

Rule 214.9 related to clinical learning experiences states:

*(f)(3) Clinical learning experiences shall be sufficient in quantity and quality to provide opportunities for students to achieve the stated outcomes.*

Clinical experiences occur only in long-term care facilities and do not include a variety of experiences to meet program and clinical objectives. **Therefore**, the program director shall obtain clinical affiliation agreements to provide a range of clinical experiences to meet program and clinical objectives and comply with Rule 214. The program director shall provide copies of signed clinical agreements and clinical schedules for all students to comply with Rule 214 to Board Staff by June 1, 2012.

**Requirement #2:**

Rule 214.7(a)(6) related to faculty states:

*(A) Orientation of new nursing faculty members shall be initiated at the onset of employment.*

*(B) A plan for nursing faculty development shall be offered to encourage and assist faculty members to meet the nursing program's needs as well as individual faculty members' professional development needs.*

The program has experienced significant faculty turnover, and current faculty have not been oriented to the educator role. Additionally, current faculty have not been prepared for clinical simulation. **Therefore**, the program shall submit written policies and implementation plans for faculty orientation and faculty development to Board Staff by June 1, 2012.

**Requirement #3:**

Rule 214.6 related to administration and organization directs:

*(d) Salaries shall be adequate to recruit, employ, and retain sufficient qualified nursing faculty members with the expertise necessary for students to meet program goals .*

*(e) The controlling agency/governing institution shall provide financial support and resources needed to operate a nursing educational program which meets the legal and educational requirements of the Board and fosters achievement of program goals. The financial resources shall support adequate educational facilities, equipment and qualified administrative and instructional personnel.*

The program director reported difficulty recruiting qualified faculty due to non-competitive salaries at Fortis Institute. Additionally, the program director is required to teach sixteen (16) hours per week in the classroom, and faculty report heavy workloads that do not allow them adequate time for preparing lesson plans and grading papers. **Therefore**, the administration shall submit written policies for faculty and director workloads, as well as evidence of providing adequate numbers of instructional personnel, and a salary structure reflecting competitive faculty salaries to Board Staff by June 1, 2012.

**Requirement #4:**

Rule 214.11 related to facilities, resources, and services states:

*(a) The controlling agency/governing institution shall be responsible for providing: (1) educational facilities, (2) resources, and (3) services which support the effective development and implementation of the nursing educational program.*

*(c) The director/coordinator and faculty shall have adequate secretarial and clerical assistance to meet the needs of the program.*

The nursing program currently shares two (2) receptionists with the other six (6) programs on campus. Additionally, the program does not currently have a librarian or other learning resource center staff, and insufficient supplies are available to students for skills practice. **Therefore**, the administration shall submit written evidence that the nursing program has dedicated secretarial and clerical assistance that is adequate to meet the needs of the program, as well as a librarian, and skills lab supplies available for student practice to Board Staff by June 1, 2012.

Requirements are mandatory criterion based on program assessment directly related to the rule that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

Documentation of the address of the above requirements to be met shall be submitted to the Board office at the times identified in each requirement. If you have question or if we may be of assistance, please contact Board staff at 512-463-4631 or [robin.caldwell@bon.texas.gov](mailto:robin.caldwell@bon.texas.gov)

Sincerely,

Kristin K. Benton, MSN, RN

President

Robin Caldwell, PhD, RN, CLNC

Nursing Consultant for Education

cc: William Bowker, Campus President  
Texas Workforce Commission  
Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools