



**Veterans Health  
Administration**

VA NEBRASKA-WESTERN IOWA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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# NEWS RELEASE

**VA NEBRASKA-WESTERN IOWA HEALTH CARE  
SYSTEM NURSES EARN ANCC'S PRESTIGIOUS  
"PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE" DESIGNATION**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

OMAHA, Neb. – The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System has earned the American Nurses Credentialing Center's prestigious "Pathway to Excellence" designation.

"Achieving this designation is the result of the dedication and hard work of VA Nebraska Western Iowa's outstanding nurses and team members," said Eileen Kingston, Associate Director for Patient Care. "Our motivation for embarking on this journey was to ensure that we create a work environment that provides excellent patient care for our Veterans. That is what gives us the greatest joy and satisfaction in attaining this premier designation."

The designation covers the entire VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, which operates medical centers in Omaha and Grand Island, a major community-based outpatient clinic in Lincoln, and smaller community-based outpatient clinics in Shenandoah, Iowa, and Bellevue, Holdrege, Norfolk and North Platte in Nebraska.

VA NWIHCS employees 535 registered nurses and 150 licensed practicing nurses in a variety of care settings ranging from home-based primary care, ambulatory care, acute, skilled and long-term care.

According to the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Website, the Pathway to Excellence Program® is the premier designation for healthy work environments and recognizes health care organizations and Long-Term Care organizations for positive practice environments where nurses excel. Any size or type of health care group where nurses care for patients may apply.

To qualify, organizations must meet six Practice Standards essential to an ideal nursing practice environment. Applicants undergo a review process to fully document the integration of those standards in the organization's practices, policies, and culture. Pathway designation can only be achieved if an organization's nurses validate the data and other evidence submitted, via an independent, confidential survey. This critical element exemplifies the theme of empowering and giving nurses a voice.

"This designation demonstrates that our nurses work in an environment that promotes professional development, facilitates participation in shared decision making, and creates strong nurse leaders to continue to provide excellent patient care to our Veterans," Kingston said. "This journey to meeting Pathway to Excellence standards is an ongoing process and we will continue to build on this success of creating healthy work environments so we can provide outstanding care for our nation's heroes."

“Our Veterans inspire us every day to continually strive for excellence,” Kingston added.

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System began working toward the designation in 2017. According to Stefanie Jones, who serves as the VA NWIHCS’ Pathway to Excellence coordinator, the designation is significantly meaningful to the organization’s nursing staff and the Veterans they care for.

“This designation validates that the efforts of our organization in creating an engaged and empowered nursing workforce”, Jones said. “Our organization values input from the frontline nurses, which in turn helps create better outcomes for our Veterans.”

“Plus, this designation was given from an outside organization,” Jones added. “So, it shows that we’re not only meeting the standards of health care, we’re exceeding them.”

The designation lasts for four years.

“It’s a great achievement to earn this designation,” Jones said. “However, this is a continuous journey. The nursing staff will continue to refine and improve processes to ensure safe and quality care for our Veterans.”