

Background

In 1992 in collaboration with Far West Research Laboratory, the **National Consortium for Health Science Education (NCHSE) (formerly NCHSTE, the National Consortium on Health Science and Technology Education)** was awarded a three-year \$1.4 million dollar grant by the U.S. Department of Education to establish **National Healthcare Skill Standards**. The grant was one of twenty-two issued collaboratively by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor to establish common standards for industry sectors that employ the largest number of the working population.

The resultant eleven common healthcare foundation standards and four career pathway standard sets; Diagnostic, Therapeutic, Environmental and Health Information, provided the basis for all other consortium curriculum related materials. During the process more than 1,000 healthcare employers, college and university faculty, secondary teachers and professional organization representatives provided input to identify common practices, reviewed the content for each standard, and pilot tested the results within their agency or organization. Dissemination of the **National Healthcare Skill Standards** began in September 1995 at an unveiling reception in Washington, DC with policy makers and pilot site representatives in attendance.

After extensive discussion, it was agreed that the career pathway standards would be organized by function rather than job title to create a more manageable grouping. Once the standards were completed a "Setting the Bar Summit" was held to add accountability criteria or performance measures to the foundation standards. These criteria were intended to further describe each standard and to be used as a basis for curriculum design and standards assessment. More than sixty employers, representatives from professional associations, and educators both secondary and postsecondary participated in the work at the Summit.

A second "Setting the Bar Summit" was held in 2002 to reevaluate the career pathway standards and add accountability criteria for each. As a result several of the career pathways were renamed and a fifth pathway was added; Health Information was changed to Health Informatics, Environmental Services was changed to Support Services and Biotechnology Research and Development was added. Revisions and additions to the standards were made and accountability criteria for each standard were developed.

National Healthcare Foundation Standards and Accountability Criteria

The healthcare standards offer an answer to the question, "What does a worker need to know and be able to contribute to the delivery of safe and effective healthcare?" The standards represent core expectations most workers need to succeed in health careers. Benefits of having nationally validated healthcare standards include potential to forge strong links among various stakeholders. The foundation standards provide a common language, common goal, and a common reference point for educators, employers and consumers. The National Healthcare Foundation Standards include the Accountability Criteria that serve to better define expectations for meeting the standards, to provide

content for curriculum design, and a framework for measurement and certification of achievement.

A committee of subject matter experts revised the accountability criteria in May 2009. Revisions were minor as the content and intent of the criteria did not change from previous updates in January 2008; simply some wording. Attempts were made to have more user-friendly language, add clarity, and delete duplicates. In January 2011, the accountability criteria for Foundation Standard 11: Information Technology Applications were enhanced to reflect workforce needs created by the electronic health record (EHR) and health information technology (HIT).

The standards allow:

- Students and parents to have clear direction to help set goals for future employment;
- Educators are able to design quality curriculum and instruction consistent with industry expectations; and
- Consumers and employers benefit from high quality, efficient healthcare delivery from well-trained workers.

**View the [National Healthcare Foundation Standards and Accountability Criteria](#). (PDF)
(Updated July 2012)**

Pathway Standards (Updated July 2012)

Five Pathway Standards are currently available:

- [Therapeutic Services Standards](#) (PDF)
These standards apply to occupations or functions primarily involved in changing the health status of the patient over time. The standards specify the knowledge and skills needed by professionals in the therapeutic services pathway.
- [Diagnostic Services Standards](#) (PDF)
These standards apply to occupations and functions primarily involved in creating a picture of the health status of the patient at a single point in time. The standards specify the knowledge and skills needed by professionals in the diagnostic services pathway.
- [Health Informatics Standards](#) (PDF)
These standards apply to occupations or functions that document patient care. The standards specify the knowledge and skills needed by professionals in the health informatics pathway.
- [Support Services Standards](#) (PDF)
These standards apply to occupations or functions involving direct or patient care that create a therapeutic environment of providing that care. The standards specify the knowledge and skills needed by professionals in the support services pathway.
- [Biotechnology Research & Development Standards](#) (PDF)
These standards apply to occupations and functions primarily involved in biotechnology research and development that applies to human health. The standards specify the knowledge and skills needed by professionals in the biotechnology research and development pathway.