



## **Respiratory Therapy Program**

**2025-2026**

### **Student Handbook**



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## Section I

### Welcome Respiratory Therapy Students

Congratulations on your acceptance into the River Valley Community College (RVCC) Respiratory Therapy Program! We are delighted that you have chosen to start your journey with us. Respiratory Therapy is an essential and vital portion of patient care. The program utilizes evidence-based educational principles that are delivered through didactic classroom lectures and activities, laboratory practice, and practicum experiences. Practicum competency is gained through actual hospital experience.

The Respiratory Therapy faculty team strives to create a supportive academic environment. Students are encouraged to ask questions and engage in debate with their instructors and fellow students. Students are encouraged to work together to build teamwork skills essential for the workplace.

This Program Handbook is a vital tool for ensuring an understanding of the program's policies, procedures, and expectations for Respiratory Therapy students; please review it carefully. During the first week of class, we will review this document, the program's policy and procedure manual, and address any questions you may have. In addition to this handbook, please refer to the [RVCC Student Handbook](#) for general policies and procedures. Program policies are subject to revision. Respiratory Therapy students are notified by written notice of revisions.

We hope you will engage in student activities not only in the Respiratory Therapy program but also throughout the college. Some of the opportunities include joining the Respiratory Therapy Club and the Student Senate. Through these organizations, you will have opportunities to participate in community service events, health activities, and fundraising. We are excited you have joined our Respiratory Therapy program and look forward to supporting you throughout your educational journey.

The Respiratory Therapy Program at RVCC is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC). The program number is 200249. Additional information can be found at [www.coarc.com](http://www.coarc.com).

Your input, both as a student and later as a graduate, is equally crucial to this Program, College, and Community. Each person at the College is committed to your success —both as a student and a professional, and most importantly, as an individual. If you need additional assistance, our doors are always open to you.

Welcome to the Respiratory Therapy program!

Sincerely,

Kathy Hilliard, MSRT, BS, RRT, RCP  
Program Director

Steven Zackowski, BSRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS, RCP  
Director of Clinical Education

## River Valley Community College Mission Statement

River Valley Community College transforms lives by providing a quality and affordable education through innovative personal approaches to lifelong learning and career pathways.

### Respiratory Therapy Program Mission Statement

The Respiratory Therapy program shares the mission of the Community College System and River Valley Community College to fully prepare each student to meet the professional needs of the Healthcare System. The Respiratory Therapy Program provides a comprehensive educational experience with varied instructional methods to empower students to meet the needs of the healthcare system. The Respiratory Therapy Program Teaching Physiology Statement is that the program is committed to the development of competent Respiratory Therapists through academic and practicum learning of mastery competencies, and the stimulation of personal/professional growth. The program will encompass the utilization of effective learning domains - cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains.

In addition, the Respiratory Therapy program at River Valley Community College is committed to and shall:

- Prepare post-secondary students to practice successfully in the field of Respiratory Therapy, in hospitals, clinics, research, and sales and marketing.
- Foster positive citizenship through community partnerships, assisting the student to become a productive and contributing member of the community.
- Provide each student with the opportunity to learn skills enabling them to become lifelong learners.

### Program Philosophy

The faculty believes that to develop students to their full potential, the curriculum should be responsive and responsible to students and the profession. The respiratory Therapy Program emphasizes the cultivation of learning, intellectual curiosity, moral and ethical principles, technical competence, and a high level of interpersonal communication skills. We believe that it is our responsibility to instill in each student a desire to achieve their full potential through experiences that require active participation by the student in the educational process. Dedication to the learning process during training is essential and is the key to success in this program.

The nature of the health care field demands an ethical and moral approach to the profession. Caring for people whose health is impaired depends on the expertise and wisdom of practitioners who value the patient's rights to receive the best care possible. Good bedside manners, courtesy, and respect for the rights and feelings of others are the keystones that keep the profession's foundation solid. Contemporary health care involves employing highly technical equipment in the care of seriously ill patients. The degree of knowledge and skill necessary to safely utilize this equipment on patients requires students to remember facts and apply operational principles and judgments to practicum situations.

## **Programmatic Accreditation**

The Respiratory Therapy Program at RVCC is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC). The program number is 200249. The CoARC main website is <https://coarc.com/>.

## **American Association of Respiratory Care (AARC)**

AARC is a non-profit organization and is the only professional organization supporting Respiratory Care in the United States. The AARC encourages and promotes professional excellence, advances in the science and practice of Respiratory Care, and serves as an advocate for patients, their families, the public, the profession, and the respiratory therapist. RVCC's Respiratory Therapy Programs follow all AARC guidelines. All Respiratory Therapy students will join AARC as students and take advantage of all student membership opportunities. As a student AARC member, the student will obtain student membership in the NH/VT Society for Respiratory Care (NHVTSRC). Membership in the AARC is part of your professional grade rubric for each didactic course in the program. More information is found at [www.aarc.org](http://www.aarc.org).

The RVCC Respiratory Therapy program adheres to the AARC Code of Ethics.

### **AARC Statement of Ethics and Professional Conduct**

- In the conduct of their professional activities, the Respiratory Therapist shall be bound by the following ethical and professional principles. Respiratory Therapists shall:
- Demonstrate behavior that reflects integrity, supports objectivity, and fosters trust in the profession and its professionals.
- Promote and practice evidence-based medicine.
- Seek continuing education opportunities to improve and maintain their professional competence and document their participation accurately.
- Perform only those procedures or functions in which they are individually competent, and which are within their scope of accepted and responsible practice.
- Respect and protect the legal and personal rights of patients, including the right to privacy, informed consent, and refusal of treatment.
- Divulge no protected information regarding any patient or family unless disclosure is required for the responsible performance of duty as authorized by the patient and/or family or required by law.
- Provide care without discrimination on any basis, with respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals.
- Promote disease prevention and wellness.
- Refuse to participate in illegal or unethical acts.
- Refuse to conceal, and will report, the illegal, unethical, fraudulent, or incompetent acts of others.
- Follow sound scientific procedures and ethical principles in research.
- Comply with state or federal laws that govern and relate to their practice.

- Avoid any form of conduct that is fraudulent or creates a conflict of interest and shall follow the principles of ethical business behavior.
- Promote health care delivery through improvement of the access, efficacy, and cost of patient care.
- Encourage and promote appropriate stewardship of resources.
- Work to achieve and maintain respectful, functional, beneficial relationships and communication with all health professionals. It is the position of the American Association of Respiratory Care that there is no place in a professional practice environment for lateral violence and bullying among respiratory therapists or between healthcare professionals.

(Effective 12/94 Revised 12/07 Revised 07/09 Revised 07/12 Reviewed 12/14 Revised 04/15, by AARC.)

### **AARC Respiratory Care Scope of Practice Standards**

<https://www.aarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/statement-of-scope-of-practice.pdf>

### **National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC)**

After graduation, all Respiratory Therapy Program graduates will complete the Therapist Multiple-Choice Examination (TMC) to obtain the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) credentials. The TMC examination's high cut score determines the graduate's eligibility for the Practicum Simulation Examination (CSE). Successfully passing the CSE, the Respiratory Therapist will now be a Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT). One of the primary goals of the program is to prepare the student to obtain both the CRT and RRT credentials successfully. For more information, visit [www.nbrc.org](http://www.nbrc.org).

### **End of Program Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this program, the student will:

- Recognize that the patient is always your priority.
- Demonstrate the ability to comprehend, apply, and evaluate practicum information relevant to their role as a Respiratory Therapist.
- Perform entry-level and advanced skills competently as described by the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) Scope of Practice.
- Demonstrate personal behaviors consistent with professional and employer expectations by understanding, accepting, and abiding by the American Association of Respiratory Care (AARC) Code of Ethics.
- Execute safe practicum decision-making in respiratory care.
- Employ effective communication skills within the college and healthcare settings.
- Demonstrate personal behaviors consistent with professional and employer expectations by understanding, accepting, and abiding by the American Association of Respiratory Care (AARC) Code of Ethics.

## Section II

### Program Guidelines

The following policies directly relate to the processes and expectations of students in the Respiratory Therapy program. It is the student's responsibility to read this handbook and be familiar with these policies. Failure to do so does not relieve any student of responsibility related to the violation of any policy. Failure to comply with any of the guidelines in this Handbook may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the course or the River Valley Respiratory Therapy Program.

### Student Code of Conduct

#### Personal and Professional Behaviors

- **Attentiveness** – Students are required to attend class regularly. The student is consistently on time for lectures, labs, and practicum experiences and stays until the conclusion of presentations or activities. The student is alert and demonstrates attentiveness during the presentation.
- **Demeanor** – The student maintains a positive and open attitude toward peers, instructors, and others in all interactions. He/she functions in a supportive and constructive fashion in group situations.
- **Maturity** – Students must possess the emotional maturity and stability to engage in professional interactions with faculty, staff, professionals, the public, and other students under a wide range of circumstances, including highly stressful situations. The ability to be flexible and adaptive in demanding situations is imperative. The student functions as a responsible, ethical, law-abiding adult. The student accepts and effectively utilizes feedback and evaluations.
- **Cooperation** – The student demonstrates his/her ability to work effectively in large and small groups and with other members of the health team, freely giving and accepting in the interchange of information.
- **Moral and Ethical Standards** – The student respects the rights and privacy of all individuals, is knowledgeable and compliant with the American of Association Respiratory Care Code of Ethics and abides by all HIPPA and privacy policies per the RVCC Respiratory Therapy program and the healthcare facility.
- **Personal/Professional Boundaries** - The student maintains separate personal and professional boundaries with faculty. Some examples of professional boundary violations include excessive self-disclosure on the part of the student, or students addressing faculty in an unprofessional manner.
- **Responsibility** – Students are required to submit documents prior to admission to the program as well as updating such documents as they become due. The student needs to take full responsibility for ensuring all documents are current and submitted when due.
- **Accountability** - Students must demonstrate a willingness and ability to examine and adapt their behavior when behavior interferes with productive and harmonious professional relationships.
- **Safety** - Students are expected to provide safe care in all domains to patients they encounter during practicum experiences and to maintain fitness for duty throughout all practicum



experiences. Students must be prepared to provide care to patients in a rapidly paced, physically, and emotionally demanding environment.

- **Academic Integrity** – The student completes academic work honestly and in accordance with instructions. Plagiarism, unauthorized work sharing, use of unauthorized devices or reference materials, cheating or other failure to adhere to instructions for examinations or assignments is a violation of the Respiratory Therapy program professional standards.
- **Personal Appearance** – The student's personal hygiene and dress is expected to reflect the high standards of the Respiratory Therapy profession.
- **Provision of Care** - Faculty or on-site practicum supervisors who determine there is a potential or clear concern that the student is unable to maintain the provision of safe care to patients, or that the student's actions or behaviors are detrimental to the functioning of the healthcare environment, shall remove the student from the practicum area. Depending on the reason for the removal, appropriate college resources will be consulted. If an immediate concern is identified, a meeting with the Program Director will be scheduled as soon as possible.
- **Chain of Command** – In Respiratory Therapy, as in many other professions, concerns and conflicts are typically managed by following a "chain of command." The chain of command, in its simplest definition, is the line of authority and responsibility along which decisions are made. Respiratory Therapy program students are expected to resolve concerns/issues by following the chain of command: immediate theory, lab, or practicum instructor, RT Practicum coordinator, Program Director, and Department Chair. Students should **never** attempt to resolve concerns by contacting practicum agency personnel directly.
- **Verbal/written communication** – All communication with RVCC faculty, staff, and students should adhere to acceptable, professional standards. All RVCC Respiratory Therapy student policies and expectations apply to the use of verbal and written communication.
- **Social Media** – All RVCC Respiratory Therapy Student policies and expectations of behavior apply to the use of social media. Students are prohibited from using social media to share confidential information about fellow students, patients, or practicum affiliations.

### **Civility**

Civility is a critical principle, behavior, and attitude of professionalism in healthcare. Civility is a behavior that:

- shows respect toward another
- causes another to feel valued
- contributes to mutual respect, effective communication, and team collaboration

All students are expected to behave with civility when interacting with other students, faculty, and other individuals involved in the teaching and learning process.

### **Uncivil Behavior Examples**

Examples of uncivil behavior that are discouraged include but are not limited to:

- Demeaning, belittling, or harassing others.
- Rumor-mongering, gossiping, or using damaging or demeaning language about a classmate, instructor, practicum agency, or practicum agency employee.

- Habitually interrupting or undermining faculty instruction.
- Failure to respond to college communications, including not responding to email communications.
- Sending emails, posting information online, or sharing it via social media can be inflammatory and/or confidential in nature.
- Yelling, screaming, or demonstrating inappropriate displays of temper toward instructors, peers, practicum agency staff, or any RVCC staff.
- Threatening others, including physical threats and intimidation, verbal/nonverbal threats, and implied threats of any harm (physical, emotional, reputational).
- Consistently arriving late to class, lab, and practicum sessions.
- Knowingly withholding information needed by a peer, preceptor, instructor, practicum agency staff, or respiratory therapy program staff.
- Discounting or ignoring input from instructors or preceptors regarding classroom and/or practicum performance or professional conduct specific to the profession, as well as the standards of Respiratory Therapy and the college's expectations.

The Respiratory Therapy Program faculty reserves the right to dismiss any student who fails to meet academic and/or professional conduct/behavioral expectations from the program.

#### Course: Expectations and Repeating a Respiratory Course

- Fundamentals of Respiratory Care I, II, III, and IV courses must be taken in sequential order with a minimum grade of a “B -” (80% or higher) achieved in each Respiratory Fundamentals course to progress to the next course.
- Respiratory Therapy Practicum Practicums I, II, and III must be taken in sequential order with a minimum grade of “B” (83% or higher) achieved to progress to the next section of the program.
- All components of the course (lecture, lab, practicum) must be passed to progress in the program.
- All core Liberal Arts courses required by the Respiratory Therapy program for graduation must be completed with a minimum grade of “C” or greater.
  - Core Liberal Arts courses required by the Respiratory Therapy program for graduation, taken at other colleges, may be transferred if a “C” or greater grade is achieved. Information can be found in the RVCC College Catalog at <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/transfer-of-credit>
- Students with a “B-” or lower in a Fundamentals of Respiratory Care Course will need to repeat the course and will have **one** opportunity to pass with a “B-” or higher.
- Students with a “B” or lower in the Practicum Courses.
  - If a student does not achieve a B (83% or greater), the student will have to successfully demonstrate the required practicum competencies for that Practicum at the college in the simulation laboratory before attempting to repeat the course at a practicum site.
  - The student will have **one** opportunity to demonstrate competency in the simulation laboratory. Once they demonstrated laboratory-based competency.

They can then proceed to repeat the course and will have **one** opportunity to pass with a “B” or higher.

- Students must complete the entire respiratory sequence of courses within **three** years from the start of the first course in the RT program.
- In the case of an “F” or failure grade, students will have one chance to pass the course to be eligible to continue the program.

#### **Requesting approval for repeating a respiratory therapy course**

- Written requests to repeat a respiratory therapy course must be sent to the Program Director 60 days before the start of the semester.
- For non-progression in a respiratory therapy course, the written request should include:
  - An explanation of factors leading to the lack of progression.
  - A corrective action plan to remediate the factors that prevented success in the nursing course.
- For withdrawal from a respiratory therapy course for personal reasons, the written request should include:
  - 1. An explanation of changes in the personal situation that allow for continuation in the courses.
- Students who are in good standing and submit a substantive written request will:
  - Be given an opportunity to meet with the respiratory therapy faculty to request approval to repeat the course.
- and
- Be required to take a competency assessment in the area of non-progression. The Program Director and DCE will determine the competency assessment for students who withdraw from a course.
- The Program Director will communicate the decision to the student requesting approval after an interview, and 30 days prior to the start of the semester.
- Repeating a respiratory therapy course is contingent upon space for the student in the course.
- In the event that a practicum site asks a student not to complete the Practicum, the student will not be allowed to repeat the Practicum and will be dismissed from the program.

#### **Program Readmission**

Readmission to the program is not guaranteed. Students enrolled in the respiratory therapy program whose course of study is interrupted and who wish to re-enter the program must reapply through the College's Admissions Office to be considered for readmission. Readmission is contingent upon the student's previous academic progress, a minimum GPA of 2.0, and availability of space.

- Previously enrolled students may be re-admitted according to:
  - Reason for withdrawal.

- Meeting current admission criteria (including requirements that may have changed since the student's previous admission).
- Available vacancies.
- Review and evaluation of the student's grades and performance while previously enrolled.
- To increase students' chances of being readmitted for the following year, individuals are advised to seek academic counseling from the Program Director and the RVCC Advising Center. Admission to the program is limited to the initial admission and one re-admission. After one re-admission that results in unsuccessful progression, the student will not be permitted to continue in or reapply to the Respiratory Therapy Program at RVCC.  
<https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/readmissions>

### Academic Responsibilities

Students in the Respiratory Therapy Program are expected to:

- Adhere to the college policies/procedures, Respiratory Therapy program policies/procedures, and healthcare facility policies/procedures as noted in current handbooks, orientation modules, and as instructed by faculty.
- Acknowledge that learning is accomplished through faculty facilitation, self-directed learning, and interaction with others.
- Arrive on time to class, lab, and practicum and be engaged in the learning.
- Attend all classes, lab sessions, and work-based practicum learning experiences.
- Complete homework and other assignments on time and submit according to instructions.
- Complete all work using academic integrity and following the direction of the instructor.
- Check their school email every day when school is in session and every week during vacation time.
- Take personal responsibility for submitting and maintaining current required documents.
- Take personal responsibility for engaging in learning and success in the Respiratory Therapy program.
- The faculty of the program are available to assist students via office hours posted on their office doors, syllabus, or by appointment.
- Student advisory meetings will be scheduled as needed to review students' progress, course selection, and in preparation for graduation.
- In addition, the Program Director will communicate programmatic advice verbally and in written format on the course progression and all necessary information for student success.

### Attendance

Regular attendance in the classroom, laboratory, and practicum, is necessary for students to meet the stated objectives of the program. Students are expected to attend all scheduled didactic courses. Absences may make it impossible for a student to meet course objectives and time requirements. If an absence results in a greater than one-week duration, students should collaborate with their academic advisor to develop a plan of action to ensure compliance with program requirements. Note: A missed didactic and laboratory day can cause up to a 3-point reduction in the attendance section of the program's Professional Grade Rubric. The Professional Grade Rubric can be found in the course syllabus section of Canvas. If a Practicum Day is missed the day must be made up before the end of the semester.

#### **Absence related to surgery or injury**

Students with absences resulting from surgical or physical injury must submit documentation from their healthcare provider clearing them to attend practicum safely. Any injury that prevents a student from attending practicum will result in an absence. Students who anticipate missing more than one practicum day should consult with Accessibility Services.

#### **Absence related to pregnancy or religious observance**

Please refer to the RVCC policies related to pregnancy and religious observance

- <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/absence-due-to-religious-observation>
- <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/pregnancy-and-parenting-accommodations>

### Classroom Accommodations

Students with a documented disability are eligible for reasonable accommodations. Please contact the Accessibility Services Coordinator to set up an appointment as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented to meet your needs for the semester. Visit <https://www.rivervalley.edu/student-support/on-campus-resources/accessibility-disability-services/> for contact details and more information.

### Essential Functions/Technical Standards List

**Critical Thinking:** Respiratory therapy students should possess critical thinking ability sufficient for practicum judgment. Students must be able to identify cause-and-effect relationships in practicum situations and develop and/or participate in the development of respiratory care patient plans.

**Interpersonal Skills:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess interpersonal abilities sufficient for interaction with individuals, families, groups, etc. from a variety of social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds. A student must be able to establish rapport with patients, families, and other healthcare members.

**Communication Skills:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess communication skills sufficient for interaction with others in verbal and written form. Some examples of this are explaining treatment procedures, initiating health teaching, documenting, and interpreting therapeutic interventions, and patient/client responses.

**Mobility:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess physical abilities sufficient to transport a patient from one patient care area to another patient care area and maneuver in small spaces, stand, and walk for extensive periods. A student will need to move around in patients' rooms, workspaces, and treatment areas, and administer cardiopulmonary procedures.

**Motor Skills:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess gross and fine motor abilities sufficient to provide safe and effective respiratory care procedures. Students will need to set up, calibrate, and use equipment, position patients/clients, and perform CPR.

**Hearing:** Respiratory therapy students must possess auditory ability sufficient to monitor and assess health needs. A student must be able to hear monitor alarms, and emergency signals, auscultate breath and heart sounds, and hear cries for help.

**Visual:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess visual ability sufficient for observation and assessment necessary for safe patient care. For instance, observe patient/client responses, visualize calibration and alarms for equipment, and patient assessment.

**Tactile:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess tactile ability sufficient for physical assessment. Some examples are auscultation, percussion, palpation, and the therapeutic modalities related to therapeutic interventions. ABG drawing, suctioning, and CPT treatments on clients.

**Weight Bearing:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess the ability to lift and/or manipulate 40-50 lbs. Position clients/patients and move equipment.

**Cognitive abilities:** Respiratory therapy students shall possess the ability to be oriented to time, person, and place, organize responsibilities, and make decisions. For example, the student shall assess patient complaints and suggest/ implement appropriate treatment.

**Occupational exposures:** Respiratory therapy students may be exposed to communicable diseases and or bodily fluids, toxic substances, and medicinal preparations, and shall always use appropriate precautions. (Examples are not all-inclusive)

**Standing:** Respiratory Therapy students must have the physical stamina to stand and walk for up to 12 hours in the practicum setting.

### Employment Recommendations

Employment (either part-time or full-time) during the program is left to the discretion of the student. Any outside employment should not interfere with the responsibilities of the Respiratory Therapy program. Plans for employment should be discussed with the faculty advisor before accepting a position in the program. If a healthcare facility employs the student,

they should be aware that the nature of their duties should in no way be related to the duties of a Respiratory Therapy student. The hospital and/or health care facility must take responsibility for the student employee's actions while on duty. Neither the Respiratory Therapy faculty nor River Valley Community College shall be responsible for any activities of students while on duty as employees. Respiratory Therapy students are not permitted to be gainfully employed during assigned practicum hours.

Student employment during the practicum portion of the program: Students are not considered staff and may not accept remuneration during scheduled practicum hours. These activities are educational in nature and are not to be used to replace staff at the practicum facility.

Students may work as respiratory therapy trainees outside of the Practicum courses when employed by a healthcare facility. Trainee work time is not considered practicum time, and the program assumes no responsibility for the student or their actions during this time. Students may not represent themselves as enrolled in the program during their work time. Students misrepresenting themselves as students while working may be subject to disciplinary action by the college.

## Practicum Handbook

Work-based learning (WBL) is an educational opportunity that enables students to apply their learning in a professional workplace environment, preparing them for practice as new graduates in Respiratory Therapy. Work-based learning practicum experience has specific requirements per healthcare facility. These requirements may include immunizations, background checks, drug testing, written documentation, and/or completion of orientation modules. These requirements must be fulfilled by the student by the deadline set by the healthcare facility or the RVCC Respiratory Therapy program. Failure to meet these requirements on time may result in a student being unable to attend practicum until the requirements are met, and a practicum absence(s) will be incurred. Continued non-compliance with meeting the practicum requirements may result in an Administrative Failure (AF) in the course, as outlined in the excessive practicum absence policy.

- Practicum experiences are arranged in healthcare facilities throughout New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts.
- Students may only administer medications and treatment modalities under the direct supervision of the respiratory practicum preceptor.
- Practicum agencies may require social security numbers in their entirety or in part for practicum requirements.
- Practicum placements are subject to availability and may require travel. Students are responsible for their own transportation.
- Information addressing potential exposure to infectious and environmental hazards is provided to students before they undertake an educational activity that will place them at risk.

- Each practicum site, as applicable, is responsible for ensuring students have this information and are compliant with any and all education and training specific to exposure to infectious and environmental hazards.
- Any student who develops an illness, injury, or occupational exposure during a practicum experience will receive treatment and be billed for services by the practicum facility. Students must immediately notify the DCE and may need to report (according to facility policy) to other agencies. The DCE will document and report the incident to the Program Director and/or Department Chairperson.
- Students will be required to undergo background checks and drug screenings upon entering and throughout the duration of the program. Background checks and drug screenings may have differing timeframes, locations, requirements, and costs, depending upon individual practicum site requirements.
  - Costs of background checks and drug tests are the responsibility of the student.
  - Failure to complete background checks and/or drug screenings by RVCC and/or practicum agency-specified timeframes will result in a student being denied access to the work-based learning practicum resulting in an Administrative Failure (AF) in the course.
  - Students with a positive drug screen will be denied access to the work-based learning practicum, resulting in an Administrative Failure (AF) in the course.
  - If a healthcare agency refuses to allow the student to participate in a work-based learning practicum experience based upon a criminal background check result or behavioral concern, an Administrative Failure (AF) will result.

### Required Practicum Documentation

Students must provide proof of immunization as stated in the college catalog, as required by any State laws (i.e., NH, VT, Mass), which includes:

- Submit documentation of a Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (TDaP) vaccination administered within the past 10 years.
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) - 2 vaccinations or positive antibody titer.
- Varicella (Chickenpox) - 2 vaccinations or a Positive antibody titer.
- Hepatitis B – 3 vaccinations, a positive antibody titer, or a declination waiver.
- Tuberculosis Skin Test – 1st-year student: 2-step TB skin test
  - (Administered 1 – 3 weeks apart, OR if positive results, submit a QuantiFERON Gold blood test (lab report required))
- 2nd-year students: If the 1-step TB test yields a positive result, submit a QuantiFERON Gold blood test (lab report required).



- Arrangements for the student to receive the vaccine may be made through their personal physician or at their local Health Department, at the student's personal expense.

A drug screen will be required before attending the practicum affiliates; most practicum sites require a drug screen within 30 days or less of the start of the practicum rotation. It will consist of 12 individual screening areas. Refusal to undergo testing or a positive drug test could jeopardize the student's progression in the program.

The student will be required to attend in-service sessions defining OSHA standards for health and safety in the workplace and HIPAA to protect patient privacy while in a healthcare facility.

- An annual flu shot will be required.
- The student may be required to submit additional health information to the practicum site in order to participate in a specific practicum affiliation.
  - Individual practicum sites may require a COVID-19 vaccination to participate. As with all practicum program requirements, the site reserves the right to deny participation to any student who fails to meet the basic eligibility criteria. CCSNH students who do not meet the eligibility criteria for practicum programming may be required to select an alternative course of study if they cannot obtain the required practicum experience for their chosen program. Individual programs of study are not required to secure practicum experience for students who do not meet eligibility criteria. While these are not college requirements, failure to adhere to the practicum site requirements will result in ineligibility to complete the Respiratory Therapy program.

All students must meet essential/technical standards, dress code standards, grade standards, and additional requirements, including Drug Testing, Immunizations, CPR certification is obtained as a freshman, proof of health Insurance, and Criminal/Sexual Offender Records Information (CORI/SORI) check. The student will be responsible for those expenses. RVCC provides the students with Liability Insurance.

Students are required to complete all mandatory practicum rotation documentation and requirements **30 days prior to the start date** of the Practicum, **except for drug testing, which must be completed at least 2 weeks prior to the start date**. Castle Branch, an electronic Allied Health record-keeping system, will be purchased by the student and utilized for collecting and tracking the practicum clinical requirements. The information will be entered into the Castle Branch website <https://portal.castlebranch.com/RH62>. Failure to complete practicum site documentation and requirements will result in the student being unable to participate in the

Practicum. Practicum site requirements are subject to change at the request of each practicum site.

### Criminal Background Checks

Practicum affiliation sites require a criminal background check on students attending a practicum rotation at their facility. The practicum affiliation site reserves the right to deny a student the ability to attend the practicum rotation at their site. Denial of a student by a practicum site will jeopardize the student's ability to complete the program. Students are encouraged to disclose any concerns related to the criminal background checks to the DCE before being assigned a practicum.

### Facility Orientation

A few of our practicum sites require students to attend a mandatory facility orientation. The practicum affiliation will give students the date and time of the mandatory orientation. The student is responsible for arranging and attending the orientation around their scheduled class time. Failure to attend the orientation may result in the student's inability to participate in the practicum rotation and complete the practicum.

### Health and Physical Examination Requirements

#### Medical Health Insurance

Students are **required** to have comprehensive health insurance to attend the Practicum. To be accepted, health insurance must meet the following criteria:

- United States-based insurance plan.
- Provides the 10 essential health benefits specified in the Affordable Care Act (<https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/essential-health-benefits/>).
- Includes access to hospital and physician providers in the area where the student is attending a New Hampshire community college.
- Will remain in effect for the entire semester (except for termination due to the attainment of a maximum age, or other situation resulting in a loss of plan eligibility).

The following plans DO NOT meet the criteria:

- An accident-only policy
- A short-term limited duration health plan that does not meet the requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)
- A ministry sharing plan, even if the ACA recognizes it.
- Any other health benefits program (e.g., a community care program) that is not recognized by the State of NH as being health insurance (or is not a health benefits plan)

governed by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974) and does not meet all the requirements specified above.

### **Professional Liability Insurance**

Malpractice Insurance is required by practicum sites and provided by River Valley Community College for all students in health-related programs. The RVCC group provides coverage to a limit of 1 million per incident to a maximum of 3 million per year. Coverage must be maintained through all semesters in which the student is enrolled. The coverage is in force only when acting as a student and will not cover any aide, volunteer, or paid positions held by the student. The student can purchase individual personal student professional liability insurance.

### **Injury or Accident**

In the event an injury or accident such as a needle stick or fall occurs while the student is at a practicum affiliate, the preceptor at the affiliate will be notified immediately so that the proper practicum site policy and procedures can be followed. Utilization of medical services available in the practicum facility will be the responsibility of the student. Also, an RVCC incident report must be completed.

<https://ccsnh.omnigo.one/CESReportExec/olr/OLRMain.aspx?IsAuth=1&groupid=118>

### **Practicum Dress Code**

The image projected to patients must be of a clean, caring, and professional individual to promote an atmosphere of comfort, security, and confidence. To project this image, the following dress code has been adopted:

1. The uniform shall consist of a clean dark blue scrub top and bottom with an RVCC student patch sewn on the right sleeve. Footwear should be neat and clean, open-toed footwear is not acceptable.
2. Closed-toed shoes must be worn.
3. An RVCC student identification badge is always required while at the practicum facilities unless the practicum facility has site-specific student badges.
4. Long hair must be kept clean, neat, and tied back if below shoulder length. Hair color must be of a naturally occurring shade (i.e., no hot pink hair). Men will be clean-shaven every day. Mustaches and beards are permitted but must be kept neatly trimmed.
5. Jewelry must be conservative and kept to a minimum. Wedding rings, graduation rings, and watches are permitted. Earrings should consist of one stud-type earring per ear. Body piercings, except for earrings, should not be able to be seen. If so, they are to be removed while the student is in the practicum setting. Tattoos should be kept covered and not observable by others. In areas such as neonatal ICU and surgery, jewelry is not permitted.

6. All students should take extra care to maintain the best hygiene possible. No perfumes, colognes, after-shave, and/or scented lotions are permitted, as they may put a cardiopulmonary compromised patient in danger. Make-up and cosmetics should be in good taste and discreet. Mouthwash or breath fresheners may be necessary during the day. Deodorants/antiperspirants may also be needed so offensive odors do not handicap interaction with patients, family members, or other healthcare professionals.
7. All students must keep their fingernails clean and short. This is to protect both the student and the patient from injury. Fingernails may be painted with clear polish. Acrylic or other applied nails are not permitted.
8. Chewing gum is prohibited in patient care areas. It presents an unprofessional appearance.
9. A stethoscope must be purchased for use during laboratory and practicum practice. Students are required to have their stethoscopes with them during all practicum assignments.
10. Protective eyewear may be purchased to protect the student from exposure to contaminated blood and bodily fluids.
11. Students must have a black ink pen with them during practicum assignments for documentation in the patient practicum record. Never use any color of ink other than black in a patient's record.
12. A watch with a second hand is required for all practicum assignments to accurately record heart rate and respirations.
13. Cell phones are to be set to vibrate during practicum sessions.

**Note:** *Failure to follow these practicum guidelines or arriving unprepared for a practicum may result in the student being asked to leave the practicum setting. The missed time must be made up on a designated make-up day in coordination with the DCE and the practicum site.*

### Practicum Attendance Policy

Due to the diversity and spontaneity of practicum experiences available to respiratory therapy students, regular attendance at practicum rotations is crucial. Unlike classroom and laboratory experiences, the types of learning experiences available in the practicum setting are often unplanned. Therefore, attendance at all practicum rotations is of utmost importance for the student to gain the most from their practicum practice. Success as a practitioner is closely correlated with the amount of time spent in practicum training. Practicum practice is the central activity through which the components of competence — knowledge, technical skills, values, and attitudes — are developed. Students are expected to be present and prompt at all practicum related program activities. If the College is closed due to the weather, the student is excused from that practicum day but must notify the practicum site that they will not be

attending. Students will work with the practicum site and the DCE to make up the hours for that day to meet the total number of hours required for the practicum.

- Practicum students must report to the assigned respiratory departments before the start of the shift report so they can participate in the pre-shift report and depart after the end of the shift report. Students are responsible for verifying the start and end times of their assigned day shift with their practicum site. Two full points will be deducted from their professional attendance grade for each unacceptable absence, unapproved tardiness, or early departure from the practicum site. Note: Absences, tardiness, and early departure from the practicum site can only be approved by the course instructor.
- Students are expected to log into Trajecsyst via any electronic device at the start of the practicum day and log off after the end of the practicum day. They must also enable the location feature in Trajecsyst. Blocking your location will result in a one-point (1) deduction from the student's professional attendance grade for each event.
- Students will have **12 hours** to enter any missed in or out punches into the Trajecsyst system. If the time is not entered in 12-hour increments, a 1-point reduction will be applied to the professional attendance grade.
- Students are required to submit verification for any absence from a practicum day. Excused absences will be limited to illness documentation from a physician, death in the immediate family as documented by an obituary, and vehicle breakdown (receipt for towing or repair must be submitted).  
Unexcused absences are defined as any absence without proper verification.
- Extended illness or other unusual circumstances resulting in an absence of more than 2 practicum days will be evaluated on an individual basis by the program faculty.
- Any absence from the practicum (excused or unexcused) must be made up on the student's own time with coordination from DCE and the practicum site. Practicum time cannot be "banked" by spreading out time to make up for a previous or future absence.
- **Call-in Policy:**  
The Coordinator of Practicum Education (DCE) and the practicum site must be notified at least 1.5 hours before the start of the scheduled shift if the student is going to be absent. Students must request to speak to the shift supervisor on duty. In the event the supervisor is unavailable, the student is responsible for recording the name of the person who receives the message.
- **Tardiness Policy:**  
Students are expected to report to practicum assignments 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time. The practicum site and the DCE must be notified at least thirty minutes before the scheduled start time if the student is going to be late. Frequent or habitual tardiness is disruptive to the delivery of good patient care and will not be tolerated. The program faculty will counsel students who are habitually late to remedy the problem. Students are required to punch in and out through the Trajecsyst system. Any missed punches must be corrected within 12 hours of the missed time.
- **Cell Phone Policy:**  
Students are expected to deliver quality care to the patients they encounter in the

practicum setting. Because personal phone calls can be disruptive to patient care, cell phones should be set to vibrate during practicum hours. During breaks, it is permissible to check for emergency calls that might have come in.

- Pregnancy: refer to the RVCC Student Handbook (see above).
- At no time will students leave the practicum facility during scheduled practicum time. Students who are caught leaving practicum early or are reported by their affiliate to have left early will be dismissed from the Respiratory Therapy program. If a student needs to leave a practicum facility due to unforeseen circumstances or an emergency, the DCE must be contacted immediately.
- The PD and DCE will review all absences, tardiness, or variances to this practicum attendance policy to assure fairness and uniform application.

#### Inclement Weather-Related Absences/Tardiness

If River Valley Community College is closed due to weather-related reasons, a student is not required to attend the practicum site. If River Valley Community College has a delayed opening due to weather-related reasons, students are expected to arrive at the assigned clinic when the college opens. For example, a two (2) hour delay means that if the clinic starts at 7:00 a.m., the student arrives at the clinic at 9:00 a.m. to begin. This missed time must be documented in Trajecsys. Please note that canceled practicum days and/or reduced practicum hours must be made up before the end of the semester. The safety of our students is paramount and of the utmost importance. <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/cancellation-of-classestwo-hour-delay>

Because of the difference in student placement, it is not possible to have a centralized person making decisions regarding weather that may pose undue safety hazards to the student. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the student to objectively evaluate weather conditions and notify the practicum site as early as possible if they deem conditions are too hazardous for safe travel at the time they are to start their shift. Students should make every attempt to arrive as early as possible at their practicum site that day or plan on making up days missed due to weather at the discretion and convenience of the practicum facility. Abuse of this policy will affect the final grade for all rotations and may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. Listen to the radio, television, or the RVCC-RAVE system for school closing announcements. Sign up to receive automatic text, email, and phone alerts. Makeup time will be scheduled by the Practicum Site, the student, and the DCE.

#### Evaluation of Practicum Practice

All activities must be performed under the direct supervision of a licensed New Hampshire, Vermont, and/or Massachusetts respiratory therapist, acting as a practicum site preceptor. Direct supervision means that the supervising respiratory therapist must be in the room with the student. Students will be evaluated on specific procedures after sufficient

practicum practice. The practicum competencies are the same as the competencies used in the laboratory section of the Respiratory Therapy program.

The student's practicum progression toward practicum competence will be formally evaluated at the middle and end of the semester by their practicum preceptor. These two occasions are referred to as the Student Performance Evaluation. The relationship between the student and the preceptor should be one of student-teacher rather than employer-employee or co-worker. The student-teacher relationship should be founded on mutual trust, respect, open communication, and a shared understanding.

#### Evaluation Process

1. The practicum preceptor observes the student performing a specific procedure.
2. If the student completes the competency, the practicum preceptor will sign off as passed for that observed competency.
3. If at any time during the evaluation, the student fails to complete a step that is essential to the procedure, the preceptor will prompt them. Completion of the procedure is up to the preceptor's discretion.
4. If a student does something or fails to do something that could cause harm to the patient or the student, the evaluation will be terminated, and the practicum preceptor will complete the procedure. The student will not pass this competency at this time.
5. If the practicum preceptor takes over the performance of the procedure, the student will wait until the procedure is completed before discussing the incident. This discussion will take place privately and away from the patient's room. Under no circumstances should a discussion ensue in the patient care area.
6. All procedural competency evaluations will be documented in Trajecs.
7. A procedural competency evaluation that does not demonstrate 100 percent proficiency will not be counted in the total competencies for that practicum rotation.
8. Students are required to complete a daily practicum log in Canvas that explains student experiences and interactions. Students must also complete preceptor evaluations and practicum site evaluations by the designated due dates. Students are required to meet with preceptors to complete their student practicum competencies, which will be posted in Trajecs. For more information, please refer to the course syllabus.

Student Performance Evaluations are designed to enable the practicum preceptor to evaluate students in the primary areas of practicum performance and competency with a 5-point grading scale of 1 unacceptable, 2 weak, 3 average, 4 excellent, 5 outstanding, in the following 12 content areas:

1. Attendance/Punctuality
2. Appearance/Prepared for Clinic

3. Communication/Interaction with Instructor/Preceptor
4. Communication/Interaction with Staff/Peers
5. Work Ethic
6. Student/Patient Interaction
7. Adaptability
8. Patient Safety
9. Patient Assessment
10. Documentation/Verbal Report
11. Quality/Efficiency of Skills Performance
12. Management of Practicum Assignment

### **Scaling Performance**

The rating form is organized into statements describing the dimensions of student practicum effectiveness. The preceptor will provide a rating only for those areas that apply to the student's performance and for which the preceptor has had an adequate opportunity to observe.

The expected level of knowledge and performance is outlined in the course syllabus and the outlines that are provided to the practicum preceptor and students at the beginning of each practicum course.

The practicum preceptor is encouraged to provide comments regarding student performance and recommendations for further review/practice in the area provided on the evaluation form.

### **Trajecsys**

Each student will purchase and utilize Trajecsys (an internet-based program) to maintain records of Practicum Competencies, Preceptor Evaluations, and Practicum Site Evaluations for their entire time as a respiratory therapy student (<https://www.trajecs.com/>).

Every modality/experience that the student observes, assists with, performs, or achieves competency for will be documented in Trajecsys. These records are regularly reviewed by the DCE and PD. RVCC uses Trajecsys to achieve a well-rounded practicum experience. Students are highly encouraged to complete all competencies as listed in Practicum I, II, and III syllabuses. This will ensure that the student will be competent when they graduate from the program.

Students will utilize Trajecsys to clock in and out at the practicum site. These punches will be utilized to calculate the students' practicum hours. Students can use their cell phones to clock in and out.

### **Competency Checklist**



Each competency consists of a list of tasks/procedures, a definition of acceptable performance, and a scoring scheme for each procedure. The emphasis is primarily on the performance aspects of practicum procedures that define the competent respiratory care practitioner. A competency checklist that does not achieve a 100% score will not be included in the total course competency score. The competency must be attempted until a score of 100% is reached. If a successful competency is entered more than two times, that competency will only be counted twice for the total number of required competencies for that practicum.

### The Preceptor's Role and Responsibilities

The practicum preceptor is responsible for evaluating the student's performance of designated practicum skills. At this stage in the program, it is expected that the student can perform a variety of procedures with minimal assistance. If the preceptor must intervene—whether to ensure patient safety or to facilitate completion of the procedure; the evaluation must be repeated after the student has received additional practice.

The preceptor should:

1. Provide the student with an orientation to the site early in the experience to support a smooth transition and ensure effective use of available resources.
2. Clearly explain expectations for student conduct, including dress code, professional behavior, and general guidelines for the practicum experience.
3. Allow adequate time for supervision and instruction through regular interactions. Offer guidance on next steps and periodically review the students' work.
4. Provide constructive feedback to support the students' development.
5. Demonstrate patience and allow sufficient time to create an optimal learning environment.
6. Facilitate opportunities for physician interaction when appropriate.
7. Complete all scheduled evaluations and enter any completed competencies for that day in Trajecsyst.

### The Role and Responsibilities of Students

1. Review the appropriate performance evaluation.
2. Meet with the instructor to discuss any points of confusion.
3. Review the patient's medical record.
4. Ensure that all necessary equipment is readily available.
5. Be prepared to accept constructive criticism.
6. The student should function professionally, and this should be reflected in the interaction, activities, and relationships with the preceptor, patients, and all facility staff.
7. The student is expected to maintain confidentiality for all experiences. Students may describe experiences in practicum debriefing sessions, but statements of individuals are non-attributable, and information will never be communicated outside of the classroom.
8. Be professional in appearance, both in dress and conduct.
9. Adhere to the schedule agreed upon by the RVCC Director of Practicum Education.

10. Be punctual. Students are required to notify the preceptor and Director of Practicum Education as soon as there is a possibility of being late or absent.
11. Practice professional courtesy when communicating with patients, families, and other health professionals.
12. Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
13. Students are required to abide by the affiliation agreement for each practicum site.
14. Students are responsible for their transportation to the practicum sites. Carpooling (when applicable) is suggested for convenience and economic reasons.
15. Students are directly accountable to the practicum site to which they are assigned and ultimately responsible to the Director of Clinical Education (DCE).
16. Students will perform respiratory therapy procedures only when a practicum preceptor is in the same area.
17. All student signatures on patient and departmental records should be checked and co-signed by the practicum instructor and/or practicum preceptor.
18. Students are required to fill out daily practicum log sheets in Canvas.
19. At the midpoint and end of each practicum course, students will complete a Preceptor and Practicum Site evaluation form in Trajecsys.
20. The student is expected always to conduct themselves in a socially acceptable manner. When addressing classmates, instructors, and coworkers in the practicum area, an appropriate title and surname should be used unless hospital policy dictates otherwise.
21. A display of ill temper on the part of any student is inexcusable, even under trying conditions or situations. The student must remain in control of his/her emotions. The quality and tone of the voice should be quiet, pleasant, and reassuring. The use of profane or obscene language is strictly prohibited.
22. Under no circumstances will illegal possession of drugs, such as alcohol, marijuana, or narcotics, be permitted in the college or hospital. A student found to be a habitual user of such drugs or found under the influence of such drugs while in practicum or class areas will be dismissed from the Respiratory Therapy program. Hospitals have mandatory drug screening and/or police background checks. Students must adhere to these policies. A student who does not adhere to the behavioral and/or personal appearance code may be asked to leave the practicum area. Repeated offenses may raise questions about whether the student can accept personal and professional responsibility, potentially leading to dismissal from the program.
23. Falsification of documentation in a practicum situation or regarding departmental paperwork is considered unethical conduct and will result in immediate dismissal from the program.
24. Students are expected to demonstrate acceptable work habits, foster genuine relationships with others, develop effective communication skills, and exhibit professional practices and behaviors. Any problems, concerns, or questions concerning any aspect of the student's practicum experience should be brought to the attention of the DCE.
25. Any student who directly disobeys their instructor or engages in a practice deemed unsafe and potentially dangerous to patients by the Respiratory Therapy staff may be dismissed from the program. Any other behavior not specifically mentioned here but thought to

endanger the life of a patient and/or the reputation or credibility of the program will be grounds for dismissal.

26. Students in practicum training must adhere to the rules and regulations of the practicum site where training is taking place. Areas of concern include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Parking
- b. Fire and Safety
- c. Dress Code
- d. Smoking Regulations
- e. Department policies and procedures

### **Confidentiality**

The medical chart is a legal document. The student, while at the practicum site, will have access to confidential patient information. The student must remember that no information about a patient should be discussed with anyone who is not directly involved in the case. This violates the patient's rights under the law and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Therefore, a breach of confidentiality will not be tolerated. Violations of the confidentiality policy result in suspension and/or dismissal from the program.

Students will be involved in the day-to-day operations of several practicum sites. The procedures, patients, and staff activities should not be discussed outside that area. This information should be treated as confidential. Refrain from gossip. Keep in mind that these are potential employers for respiratory therapy students.

### **Responsibilities of the RVCC Faculty/DCE as related to Practicum Experiences**

1. Supports the student in setting clear, achievable goals for the practicum experience.
2. Provides ongoing support for student and preceptor needs within the assigned practicum setting.
3. Performs at least one virtual or in-person check-in each semester that includes direct interaction with the student and preceptor.
4. Is available via email and/or phone to address concerns, offer guidance, and monitor student progress throughout the semester.
5. Reviews all student evaluations and competencies as submitted by the preceptor and keeps these evaluations/competencies on file, within Trajecsyst, to document student progress.

### **Summary**

The Respiratory Therapy Student Handbook outlines all programmatic expectations, as well as the policies and procedures applicable to students enrolled in the Respiratory Therapy Program at River Valley Community College. Students are also required to abide by the River Valley Community College Student Handbook as well. Students should take their education seriously and demonstrate a genuine interest in maximizing their learning opportunities. It is the sincere hope of the College that students will utilize the numerous talents of the faculty and counselors in those instances where a need arises. Please do not hesitate to contact the program faculty with any questions or concerns regarding the information outlined in this

document. It is the policy of River Valley Community College to offer all educational and employment opportunities without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

**Last revision: 9/2013,8/2015,10/2020.1/2021,8/2021, 1/2022. 8/5/2022,8/18/2023, 7/22/2024, 7/30/2025**

CCSNH Website: <https://www.ccsnh.edu/about-ccsnh/policies/>

RVCC Website: <https://www.rivervalley.edu/current-students/registrars-office/>

RVCC Catalog/Student Handbook: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/>



## **Respiratory Therapy Program**

### **Program Policies Acknowledgment Form**

I (print your full name) \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have access to the Respiratory Therapy Student Handbook and have reviewed its contents. I understand that I am accountable for the information and policies contained in this Handbook and have contacted the Respiratory Therapy faculty of any topics I would like to review further.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date