



## Respiratory Therapy Program

**2024-2025**

### 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 excited that you chose to begin 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 clinical experiences. Clinical competency is gained through actual hospital experience.

The Respiratory Therapy faculty team aims to provide a healthy 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 an important tool to ensure an understanding of the program policies and expectations of Respiratory Therapy students; please review it carefully. During the first week of class, we will review these policies and answer any questions you may have. Along with this handbook, please review 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 becoming a member of the Respiratory Therapy Club and the Student Senate. Through these organizations, you will have opportunities to participate in community service events, health activities, and fund-raising. 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 as a student and later as a graduate is equally important to this Program, College, and Community. Each person at the College is committed to your success- as a student, 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, RRT RCP BS  
Program Director

Steven Zackowski, BSRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS, RCP  
Clinical Coordinator

## 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 the individual student to meet the professional needs of the Health Care System. The Respiratory Therapy Program will provide a comprehensive educational experience with varied educational instructional methods, to empower students to meet the needs of the health care system. The Respiratory Therapy Program Teaching Physiology Statement is that the program is committed to the development of competent Respiratory Therapists through academic and clinical 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.

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 productive and contributing members of the community.
- Provide each student the opportunity to learn skills enabling them to become lifelong learners.

### Program Philosophy

The faculty believe that to develop students to their full potential, the curriculum should be responsive and responsible to students and the profession. The department stresses cultivation of learning, intellectual curiosity, moral and ethical practice, technical competence, and a high degree 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 extremely important 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. To care for persons 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 manner, 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 clinical 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, advance 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 follows all AARC guidelines. All Respiratory Therapy students are highly encouraged to join AARC as students and take advantage of all student membership opportunities. As a student AARC member, student will obtain student membership in the NH/VT Society for Respiratory Care (NHVTSRC). Membership to the AARC is part of your professional grade for each 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 the 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 high cut score determines the graduate's eligibility for the Clinical 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 successfully obtain both the CRT and RRT credentials. More information can be found at [www.nbrc.org](http://www.nbrc.org).

### End of Program Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this program, the student will be able to:

- Recognize that the patient is always your priority.
- Demonstrate the ability to comprehend, apply, and evaluate clinical information relevant to their role as a Respiratory Therapist.
- Perform entry-level and advanced skills competently as described by the Respiratory Care Scope of Practice.
- 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.
- Execute safe clinical decision-making in respiratory care.

## Section II

### Program Policies

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 negate any student responsibility related to the violation of any of the policies. Failure to comply with any of the policies in this Handbook may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the course or River Valley Respiratory Therapy Program.

### Student Code of Conduct

#### Student Responsibilities and Professional Behaviors

##### Personal and Professional Behaviors

- **Attentiveness** – Students are required to regularly attend class. The student is consistently on time for lectures, labs, and clinical experiences and stays until the conclusion of presentations or activities. The student is alert and demonstrates attentiveness during the presentation.
- **Demeanor** – The student has a positive, open attitude toward peers, instructors, and others during 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. He/she accepts and makes good use of 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 clinical experiences and to maintain fitness for duty throughout all clinical 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 clinical 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 clinical area. Depending on the reason for 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, like many other professions, concerns and conflicts are managed by movement along 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 clinical instructor, RT Clinical coordinator, Program Director, Department Chair. Students should **never** attempt to resolve concerns by contacting clinical 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 clinical 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-learning process.

### **Uncivil Behavior Examples**

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

- Demeaning, belittling or harassing others.
- Rumoring, gossiping, or using damaging/demeaning language about a classmate, instructor, clinical agency, or clinical agency employee.
- Habitually interrupting or undermining faculty instruction.
- Lack of response to college communications, including not responding to email communication.
- Sending emails or posting information online or via social media is inflammatory and/or confidential in nature.
- Yelling, screaming, or demonstration of inappropriate displays of temper at instructors, peers, clinical agency staff, or any RVCC staff.
- Threatening others, including physical threats and intimidation, verbal/nonverbal threats, and implied threats of any kind of harm (physical, emotional, reputational).
- Consistently arriving late to class/ lab, and clinical.
- Knowingly withholding information needed by a peer, preceptor, instructor, clinical agency staff, or respiratory therapy program staff.
- Discounting or ignoring input from instructors or preceptors regarding classroom and/or clinical performance or professional conduct specific to the profession and standards of Respiratory Therapy and expectations of the college.

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

### **Academic Responsibilities**

- 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.
- 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 Clinical 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 section of the program.
- All components of the course (lecture, lab, clinical) 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 (1) one chance to pass with a "B-" or higher.
- Students with a "B" or lower in the Clinical Practicum Courses will need to repeat the course and will have (1) chance to pass with a "B" or higher. If a student does not achieve a B (83% or greater), the student will have to successfully demonstrate the required clinical competencies for that Clinical

Practicum at the college in the simulation laboratory before attempting to repeat the course at a clinical site.

- 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.
- Arrive on time to class, lab, and clinical and be engaged in the learning.
- Attend all classes, lab sessions, and work-based clinical 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 in the syllabus or by appointment.
- Advisory meetings will be scheduled as needed to review student’s progress, course selection and in preparation for graduation.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical 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 Clinical 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 safely attend clinical. Any injury that prevents a student from attending clinical will result in an absence. Students who think they may miss more than one clinical 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 clinical judgment. Students must be able to identify cause-and-effect relationships in clinical 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 clinical setting.

### Confidentiality of Health Information

The student will safeguard the client's right to privacy by maintaining confidentiality. Such communications may involve verbal discussions, written communication, or electronic communication. Only those people with an authorized need to know should have access to the protected information. Students will not discuss client problems in elevators, cafeteria, lobby, or other inappropriate places. Information discussed as an aspect of clinical or classroom teaching must not be discussed or repeated

to other individuals. Students are prohibited from reading the medical records of family members and/or friends. Should faculty inadvertently assign the student to a family member or friend/acquaintance, the student is expected to request another assignment. Disclosure of confidential information may subject the student to liability based on defamation, invasion of privacy, or HIPAA violation as well as immediate dismissal from the program. All clinical assignments will be de-identified by removing the information one could use to identify the patient or clinical setting. No patient records should be removed from the clinical setting. Students will abide by the policies established in the clinical setting. Violation of either college or healthcare facility HIPAA and/or privacy policies can result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the RVCC Respiratory Therapy program.

### Program Readmission

*Re-admission to the program is not guaranteed and depends on the availability of clinical space in the affiliate institutions at the time the student desires re-entry.*

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 Admissions Office of the College to be considered for re-admission. Readmission is contingent upon the student's previous progress, a minimum GPA of 2.0, and available space. Previously enrolled students may be re-admitted according to:

- 1) Reason for withdrawal.
- 2) Meeting current admission criteria (including requirements that may have changed since the student's previous admission).
- 3) Vacancies available.
- 4) Review and evaluation of the student's grades and performance while previously enrolled.

To increase student's chances of being readmitted for the following year, individuals are advised to seek academic counseling from the Respiratory Therapy faculty and/or 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>

### 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 acceptance of a position in the program. If the student is employed by a health care facility, they should be aware that the nature of their duties should in no way be related to duties as a Respiratory Therapy student where the responsibilities of patient care are concerned. The hospital and/or health 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 of the student's activities while on duty as an employee. Respiratory Therapy students may not be gainfully employed during assigned clinical hours.

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

Students may work as respiratory therapy trainees outside of the Clinical Practicum courses when employed by a healthcare facility. RVCC will verify that the student is enrolled in the clinical portion of the program to

the appropriate licensure board, upon request. Trainee work time is not considered clinical time and the program does not assume any responsibility for the student or their actions during their work time. The students may not represent themselves as students enrolled in the program during their work time. Students misrepresenting themselves as students while working may be subject to disciplinary action by the college.

## Clinical Practicum Handbook Section

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

- Clinical practicum experiences are arranged in healthcare facilities in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts.
- Students may only administer medications and treatment modalities under the direct supervision of the respiratory clinical preceptor.
- Clinical agencies may require social security numbers in their entirety or part for clinical requirements.
- Clinical placements are subject to availability and may require travel. Students are responsible for their transportation.
- Any student who develops an illness, injury, or occupational exposure during a clinical experience will receive treatment and be billed for services by the clinical facility. Students are required to immediately notify the DCE and may need to report (according to facility policy) to other agencies. The DCE will document the incident and report it to the Program Director and/or Department Chairperson.
- Students will be required to complete background checks and drug screenings at the entrance to and throughout the duration of the program. Background checks and drug screenings may have differing timeframes, locations, requirements, and costs, depending upon individual clinical agency 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 clinical agency-specified timeframes will result in a student being denied access to the work-based learning clinical 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 clinical 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 clinical practicum experience based upon a criminal background check result or behavioral concern, an Administrative Failure (AF) will result.

### **Required Clinical Documentation**

1. The student must provide proof of immunization as stated in the college catalog, as required by any State laws (i.e., NH, VT, Mass), which includes:
  - a. Submit documentation of a Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap) -vaccination, administered within the past 10 years.
  - b. Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) - 2 vaccinations or positive antibody titer.
  - c. Varicella (Chicken Pox) - 2 vaccinations or Positive antibody titer
  - d. Hepatitis B – 3 vaccinations or positive antibody titer or declination waiver.
  - e. 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))
  - f. 2nd-year students: 1-step TB test if positive result, submit a QuantiFERON Gold blood test (lab report required).

Arrangements for the student to have the vaccine may be made through his/her personal physician or at their local Health Department at the student's personal expense.

2. A drug screen will be required before attendance at the clinical affiliates, most clinical sites require a drug screen within 30 days or less before the start of clinical 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.
3. The student will be required to attend in-service(s) defining OSHA standards for health and safety in the workplace, and HIPAA, to protect the patient's privacy while in a healthcare facility.
4. An annual flu shot will be required.
5. The student may be required to submit other clinical site health information to attend clinical affiliation at a specific site.
  - Individual clinical sites may require a COVID-19 vaccination to participate. As with all clinical program requirements, the site reserves the right to deny participation to any student who does not meet basic eligibility criteria. CCSNH students who do not meet the eligibility criteria for clinical programming may be required to select an alternate course of study if the student cannot obtain the required clinical experience for their chosen course of study. Individual programs of study are not required to secure clinical experience for students who do not meet eligibility criteria. While these are not college requirements, failure to adhere to the clinical 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 to be obtained as a freshman first semester, 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.

## Note:

*Students are required to complete all mandatory clinical rotation documentation/requirements 30 days before the start date of the actual Clinical Practicum except for the drug testing which must be completed 2 weeks before the start date. Castle Branch an electronic Allied Health record-keeping system will be purchased and utilized for the clinical requirements. The information will be entered into the Castle Branch website <https://portal.castlebranch.com/RH62>. The failure of the student to complete clinical site documentation/requirements will result in the student not being able to participate in the Clinical Practicum. Clinical site requirements are subject to change per clinical site request.*

## Criminal Background Checks

Clinical affiliation sites require a criminal background check on students attending a clinical rotation at their facility. The clinical affiliation site reserves the right to deny a student the ability to attend the clinical rotation at their site. Denial of a student by a clinical 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 clinical practicum.

## Facility Orientation

A few of our clinical sites require students to attend a mandatory facility orientation. Students will be given the date and time of the mandatory orientation by the clinical affiliation. The student is responsible to arrange and attend the orientation around their scheduled class time. Failure to attend the orientation could result in the inability of the student to attend the clinical rotation and complete the clinical practicum.

## Health and Physical Examination Requirements

### Medical Health Insurance

Students are **required** to have comprehensive health insurance to attend Clinical Practicums. 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 it is recognized by the ACA.



- 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 clinical 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. Individual personal student professional liability insurance can be purchased by the student.

### Injury or Accident

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

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

### Clinical 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 clinical facilities unless the clinical 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 clinical 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 comprised 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 the patient care areas. It presents an unprofessional appearance.
9. A stethoscope must be purchased for use during laboratory and clinical practice. Students are required to have their stethoscopes with them during all clinical 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 clinical assignments for documentation in the patient clinical record. Never use any other color of ink in a patient's record.
12. Students must have a calculator for use during clinical assignments.
13. A watch with a second hand is required for all clinical assignments for timing of heart rates and respirations.
14. No cell phones are to be carried on the student's person during clinical.

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

### Clinical Attendance Policy

Because of the diversity and spontaneity of clinical experiences available to respiratory therapy students, regular attendance at clinical rotations is essential. Unlike classroom and laboratory experiences, the types of learning experiences available in the clinical setting are often unplanned. Therefore, attendance at all clinical rotations is of utmost importance for the student to gain the most from their clinical practice. Success as a practitioner correlates with the amount of time spent in clinical training. Clinical practice is the central activity through which the components of competence: knowledge, technical skill, values, and attitudes, are developed. Students are expected to be present and prompt at all clinically related program activities. In the case that the College is closed due to weather, the student is excused from that clinical day but must notify the clinical site that they will not be attending that day. The student will have to work with the clinical site and the DCE to make up the hours for that day to achieve the total number of hours for that clinical practicum.

A policy regarding absenteeism and tardiness has been established following the above philosophy to allow students to develop work habits considered essential for a professional healthcare employee.

1. Clinical 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 the day shift with their assigned clinical site. Two full (2) points to their professional attendance grade for each unacceptable absence, unapproved tardiness, or early departure from the clinical site. Note: Absences, tardiness, and early departure from the clinical site can only be approved by the course instructor.
2. Students are expected to log into Trajecsyst via any electronic device at the start of the clinical day and log off after the end of the clinical day and must leave on the location feature in Trajecsyst. Blocking your location will lose one full (1) point of the student's professional attendance grade for each event.

3. Students will have **12 hours** to enter into the Trajecsys system any missed in or out punches in the Trajecsys system. If the time is not entered in 12 hours, a 1-point reduction will occur in the professional attendance grade.
4. Students are required to submit verification for any absence from a clinical day. Excused absences will be limited to illness documentation from a physician, death in the immediate family documented by an obituary, and vehicle breakdown (receipt for towing/repair must be submitted). Unexcused absences are defined as any absence without proper verification.
5. Extended illness or other unusual circumstances leading to absence of more than 2 clinical days will be evaluated on an individual basis by the program faculty.
6. Any absence from clinical (excused or unexcused) must be made up on the student's own time with coordination from DCE and the clinical site. Clinical time cannot be "banked" by spreading out time to make up for a previous or future absence.
7. Call-in Policy:  
The Coordinator of Clinical Education (DCE) and clinical site must be notified at least 1 1/2 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 not available, the student is responsible for recording the name of the person receiving the message.
8. Tardiness Policy:  
Students are expected to report to clinical assignments 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time. The clinical site and the DCE must be notified at least thirty minutes before the starting 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. Students who are habitually late will be counseled by the program faculty to remedy the problem. Students are required to punch in and out through the Trajecsys system, any missed punches must be corrected within 12 hours of the missed punch.
9. Cell Phone Policy:  
Students are expected to deliver quality care to the patients they encounter in the clinical setting. Because personal phone calls are disruptive to patient care, cell phones are not to be carried on your person during clinical hours. During breaks, it is permissible to check for emergency calls that might have come in.
10. Pregnancy: refer to RVCC Student Handbook.  
<https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/pregnancy-and-parenting-accommodations>
11. At no time will students leave the clinical facility during a scheduled clinical time. Students caught leaving clinical early or reported leaving early by their affiliate will be dismissed from the Respiratory Therapy program. If the student does need to leave a clinical facility due to unforeseen circumstances/emergency, the DCE must be contacted immediately.
12. The PD and DCE will review all absences, tardiness, or variances to this clinical attendance policy, to assure fairness and uniform application.

#### Incllement Weather-Related Absences/Tardiness

If River Valley Community College is closed for weather-related purposes, a student is not required to go to the clinical site. If River Valley Community College has a delayed opening due to weather-related purposes, the student is 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 8:00 a.m. the student arrives at the clinic at 10:00 a.m. to begin. This missed time must be documented in Trajecsys. Please note that canceled clinical days and/or reduced clinical 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-classes-two-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 clinical 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 clinical site that day or plan on making up days missed due to weather at the discretion and convenience of the clinical facility. Abuse of this policy will affect the final grade for all rotations and may result in dismissal. Listen to the radio or television or RVCC-RAVE system for school closing announcements. Sign up for text, email, and phone alerts to be sent to you automatically. Makeup time will be scheduled by the Clinical Site, the student & DCE.

### Evaluation of Clinical Practice

All activities must be performed under the direct supervision of a licensed New Hampshire, Vermont, and/or Massachusetts respiratory therapist, acting as a clinical 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 clinical practice. The clinical competencies are the same as the competencies used in the laboratory section of the Respiratory Therapy program.

### Evaluation Process

1. The clinical preceptor observes the student performing a specific procedure.
2. If the student completes the competency, the clinical 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, they will be prompted by the preceptor. Completion of the procedure is up to the preceptor's discretion.
4. If a student does something or fails to do something, that is or could cause harm to the patient or the student, the evaluation will be terminated, and the clinical preceptor will complete the procedure. The student will not pass this competency at this time.
5. If the clinical 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 Trajecsys.
7. A procedural competency evaluation that does not demonstrate 100 percent proficiency will not be counted in the total competencies for that clinical rotation.
8. Students are required to complete a daily clinical log in Trajecsys, preceptor evaluations, and clinical site evaluations, Students are required to meet with preceptors for completion of student clinical competencies which will be posted in Trajecsys more information in the course syllabus.

### Trajecsys

Each student will purchase and will utilize Trajecsys an internet-based program to maintain records of Clinical Competencies, Daily Log Sheets, Preceptor Evaluations, and Clinical Site Evaluations for his/her entire time as a respiratory therapy student. Every modality/experience that the student observes, assists, performs, or achieves competency on will be documented in Trajecsys. These records are regularly reviewed by the DCE

and PD. RVCC uses Trajecsyst to achieve a well-rounded clinical experience. Students are highly encouraged to complete all competencies as listed in Clinical Practicum I, II, and III syllabuses. This will ensure the students will be competent when he/she/they graduate from the program.

Students will utilize Trajecsyst to clock in and out at the clinical site. These punches will be utilized to calculate student's clinical hours. Students can use their cell phones to clock in and out.

To evaluate the essential elements of student performance in the clinical setting, the following evaluation tools will be utilized in Trajecsyst:

Student Performance Evaluations are designed to enable the Clinical Preceptor to evaluate students in the primary areas of clinical performance and competency with a 5-point grading scale of 1 poor, 2 fair, 3 good, 4 very good, and 5 outstanding on the following topics:

- a. Attendance, Punctuality, and Professional appearance
- b. Professional Conduct and Ethics
- c. Relationships
- d. Dependability and Judgement
- e. Motivation

### Scaling Performance

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

The expected level of knowledge and performance is outlined in the course syllabus and outlines that the clinical instructor and students are provided with at the beginning of each clinical course.

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

### 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 clinical procedures that define the competent respiratory therapy practitioner.

### Evaluation Process

The student's clinical progression toward clinical competence will be formally evaluated in the middle and end of the semester by their clinical preceptor. These two occasions are referred to as the Student Performance Evaluation.

### The Preceptor's Role

The clinical preceptor is there to evaluate the student's performance of a set of skills. At this point in the clinical rotation, it is assumed that the student can perform most procedures with a minimum amount of assistance of any kind. If it becomes necessary for the preceptor to intervene, either to safeguard the patient's welfare or to expedite the completion of the procedure, the evaluation session must be repeated after the student has had further practice.

### The Student's Role (before clinical activity)

1. Review the appropriate performance evaluation.
2. Meet with the instructor to discuss any point 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.

### General Responsibilities

1. Students are required to abide by the affiliation agreement for each clinical site.
2. Students are responsible for their transportation to the clinical sites. Carpooling is suggested for convenience and economic reasons.
3. Students will always be directly responsible to the Clinical site to whom they are assigned and be ultimately responsible to the DCE.
4. Students will perform respiratory therapy procedures only when a clinical preceptor is in the same area.
5. All student signatures on patient and departmental records should be checked and co-signed by the clinical instructor and/or clinical preceptor.
6. Students are required to fill out daily clinical log sheets in Trajecsys.
7. At the mid-point and end of each clinical practicum course, students will complete a clinical instructor evaluation form in Trajecsys.
8. The student is expected to always conduct themselves in a socially acceptable manner. When addressing classmates, instructors, and co-workers in the clinical area, an appropriate title and surname are to be used unless hospital policy dictates otherwise.
9. 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 will not be permitted at any time.
10. 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 clinical 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 clinical area. Repeated offenses will cause questions to question whether the student can accept personal and professional responsibility and may result in dismissal from the program.
11. Falsification of documentation in the clinical situation or regarding the departmental paperwork is considered unethical conduct and will result in immediate dismissal from the program.
12. Students are expected to demonstrate acceptable work habits, display genuine relationships with people, develop effective communication skills, and demonstrate professional practices and behaviors. Any problems, concerns, or questions concerning any aspect of the student's clinical experience should be brought to the attention of the DCE.
13. Any student who directly disobeys his /her instructor or engages in a practice thought to be 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.
14. Students in clinical training must observe the rules and regulations of the clinical site in which 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 clinical site will have access to confidential patient information. The student must remember that no information about a patient is to be discussed with anyone who is not directly involved with the case. This violates the rights of the patient under law and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA). 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 clinical sites. The people, procedures, patients, and staff activities should not be discussed outside that area. This should be treated as confidential information. Refrain from gossip. Remember that these are potential employers for the respiratory therapy student.

### Summary

This manual deals with policies that apply to River Valley Community College students of the Respiratory Therapy Program. Students are also required to abide by the River Valley Community College Student Handbook as well. Students should take their education seriously and show an interest in making the most of the opportunity to learn. It is the sincere hope of the College that the student will make use of the numerous talents of the faculty and counselors in those instances where a need arises. Please feel free to contact the program faculty with any questions or concerns regarding the policies contained herein. 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**

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