

**Consideration of Request to Extend an Alternative Discipline Pilot with  
Texas A&M University Health Sciences Center Rural and Community Health Institute and  
Texas A&M University Health Science Center College of Nursing**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider extending the Knowledge, Skills, Training Assessment and Research (KSTAR) Nursing pilot, with Texas A&M Health Sciences Center Rural and Community Health Institute (RCHI) and the Texas A&M University Health Science Center College of Nursing (CON). Partnering with RCHI and the CON to evaluate the effectiveness of this type of evidence-based program may inform nursing regulation and future public policy in Texas.

**Historical Perspective:**

In October 2013, the Board approved a two-year pilot program with the Texas A&M Health Science Center Rural and Community Health Institute (RCHI) and the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Nursing to offer the KSTAR program for nurses with practice violations that result in a disciplinary sanction of a warning and below.

An application for grant funding from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) was submitted in October 2013 with an aim to begin collecting data to evaluate the effectiveness of KSTAR in 2014. The grant funding was not awarded by NCSBN. Despite the lack of grant funding, the KSTAR Nursing RCHI, CON and BON team proceeded with plans to start the program in 2014.

In April 2014, the Board approved 22 Tex. Admin. Code §213.35 pertaining to Knowledge, Skills, Training, Assessment and Research that outlines criteria for the KSTAR pilot program and minimum requirements for participation. The pilot program was contemplated to be approved for a two year term with the requirement that the program be monitored for effectiveness and that research goals were to be pursued.

KSTAR Nursing enrolled the first cohort of nurses in December 2014. A summary of the program progress to date is presented in Agenda Item 3.1.3.

**Pilot Project Implementation:**

In July 2015, the KSTAR Nursing RCHI, CON and BON team began revising the original research plan. The research arm of the KSTAR Nursing pilot program will require approval by the Texas A&M Health Science Center Institutional Review Board (IRB). An application to conduct research to evaluate the effectiveness of KSTAR Nursing was submitted to the Texas A&M Health Science Center IRB on Friday, October 9, 2015. The aim start date to begin collecting data is November 1, 2015 pending IRB approval.

Board approval to conduct the KSTAR pilot expires in October 2015. Board Staff are requesting the Board to consider extending the pilot through October 2017 in order to begin collecting data pending IRB approval.

**Pros and Cons:****Pros:**

The KSTAR for nurses pilot is an innovation in nursing regulation and creates an opportunity for the Board to have input into the design and evaluation of an alternative discipline for nurses with practice-related errors. The remediation may prove less burdensome on the nurses than traditional disciplinary stipulations. The nurse may have better opportunity to reenter into practice with fewer employment barriers, yet still provide evidence-based assurance to the public of their competency. A more individualized approach to education and demonstration of competency may enhance the Board's ability to reassure the public that a nurse's practice has been remediated. A KSTAR approach may lead to a more non-punitive approach to discipline and may increase the likelihood that a nurse who has been remediated remains in the workforce. A KSTAR for nurses pilot may assist individuals who choose to re-enter nursing practice after an extended absence of four or more years. The knowledge gained from this type of evidence-based program will inform nursing regulation and future public policy. As of Monday, October 12, 2015, RCHI administration has expressed a commitment to maintain the program cost at \$2750 for participants.

**Cons:**

The cost of the program or travel requirements may prohibit some nurses with disciplinary action from participating in the pilot. There may be a perceived or real unfairness between treating nurses with similar violations differently by not having the same opportunities equally available for nurses under a Board order.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Consistent with the Board's authority under the Texas Occupations Code (Nursing Practice Act) Sections 301.453(b) and 301.1605(a), move to extend the KSTAR Nursing pilot with Texas A & M Health Science Center Rural and Community Health Institute and College of Nursing to offer the KSTAR program for nurses with practice violations that result in a disciplinary sanction of a warning and below for two years.