

## **Individual Development Plan**

### **Introduction**

When I received a call at 8 a.m. informing me that my best friend was in the hospital, I immediately started contacting different hospitals to find out his whereabouts. After finally locating him, I quickly got into my car and sped down the highway, my mind in a daze. I hardly remember the drive there; all I could think about was my friend. Upon arriving at the hospital, I found him in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), connected to a ventilator with wires and tubes all over his body. His mom was sitting there with me and told me to go in and talk to him. It felt surreal seeing my friend, who was usually lively, so quiet and subdued. I held his hand and whispered in his ear that I was there with him. Tears streamed down my face as I was unsure about his prognosis. A few minutes later, I was asked to leave the room for the doctor to perform a test on him. After a while, the test was completed. His mom and I waited anxiously in the room, hoping for any glimmer of good news. Meanwhile, his dad had suffered a heart attack and was in the cardiothoracic ICU on a different floor.

Finally, the doctor entered the room and looked up at the clock. Out loud, he announced, "Time of death: 12:01." Everything after that moment became a blur. What I do remember vividly is the kindness and comfort provided by the ICU nurse. I will never forget the feeling they instilled in me, on one of the worst days of my life. My friend was only 24 years old. The organ transplant team promptly approached us, inquiring if we wanted to donate any organs or body parts. My friend's mom was in shock, and I was the only one left to interpret her silent nods regarding what to do. We decided to donate everything we could to help those in need. I recall the plaque at his funeral and the thank-you notes from the individuals my friend had saved. It was this pivotal moment that set me on a path to become a nurse. My goal is to work as a critical care nurse in both the Emergency Department (ED) and ICU. I also hope to work as a nurse at a transplant center. Ultimately, my goal is to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) and provide anesthesia to individuals undergoing life-saving transplants. This aspiration is deeply rooted in the memory of my best friend, whose passing inspired me to pursue this meaningful career path.

### **Step 1: Explicitly define your career goals**

After completing my degree, I have explicitly defined my career goals. My top preference is to work as a Critical Care Nurse in the Emergency Department (ED), followed by a position in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). I also aspire to work as a Transplant Center Nurse and eventually become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA). I understand the importance of gaining experience in both the ED and ICU to broaden my knowledge and skills in critical care. These roles would expose me to diverse medical cases and allow me to further develop my expertise. Working within a transplant center and providing anesthesia to individuals undergoing life-saving transplants aligns with my long-term goal. I recognize that effective communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving are essential transferable skills for success in these roles. By continually developing these skills, I aim to excel in my chosen career path and enhance my employability.

### **Step 2: Identify necessary skills and knowledge**

To excel in the career path of a Critical Care Nurse in the Emergency Department (ED), Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Transplant Center Nurse, or a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), it is necessary

to possess a range of skills, talents, and abilities. Strong clinical knowledge and expertise in critical care nursing are essential, along with proficiency in assessing and monitoring patients' conditions. The ability to respond quickly and effectively in high-pressure situations, as well as being skilled in administering medications and treatments, is crucial. Knowledge of advanced life support techniques and protocols, competence in utilizing medical equipment and technology, and effective communication and collaboration with healthcare team members are also necessary skills. Empathy and compassion towards patients and their families, along with critical thinking and problem-solving skills for complex medical cases, are important attributes. Attention to detail and accuracy in documentation and record-keeping is also vital in this field. In addition to these fundamental nursing skills, there are other valuable skills and abilities for these career paths. Leadership skills for taking charge in critical situations, decision-making skills to prioritize patient care, and the ability to work well under pressure and in fast-paced environments are highly beneficial. Continuous learning and staying updated with advancements in critical care practices, expertise in patient advocacy and education, and emotional resilience to cope with challenging and emotionally demanding situations are also important qualities to develop. To succeed in my chosen career path, it is crucial to continuously develop and enhance these skills and knowledge through education, training, and hands-on experience.

### **Step 3: Assess your own skills and knowledge**

When reflecting on my current skills, talents, and abilities and comparing them to the requirements to succeed in my career path, I have identified several strengths and areas for development. I possess a strong clinical knowledge and expertise in critical care nursing, along with proficiency in assessing and monitoring patients' conditions. I am skilled in administering medications and treatments, and I have knowledge of advanced life support techniques and protocols. I am competent in utilizing medical equipment and technology, and I effectively communicate and collaborate with healthcare team members. I demonstrate empathy and compassion towards patients and their families, and I pay great attention to detail and accuracy in documentation and record-keeping. There are certainly areas where I need further development. I recognize the need to enhance my leadership skills to confidently take charge in critical situations. I also aim to improve my decision-making skills to prioritize patient care effectively. I want to strengthen my ability to work well under pressure and in fast-paced environments. Continuous learning and staying updated with advancements in critical care practices are crucial for me, and I aspire to gain expertise in patient advocacy and education. Lastly, I aim to develop emotional resilience and the ability to cope with challenging and emotionally demanding situations. To gain an outside perspective and further assess my skills and abilities, I plan to have a conversation with my graduate advisor and seek feedback from experienced nurses in my field. Their insights and guidance will be invaluable in identifying areas for improvement and growth.

### **Step 4: Write professional development goals**

In order to achieve my professional development goals, I have set a clear roadmap for the short-term, mid-term, and long-term. In the short term, my focus is on critical care nursing, attending conferences and workshops on advanced critical care practices, and developing proficiency in managing complex medical cases in the Emergency Department (ED) and Intensive Care Unit (ICU). These steps will help me enhance my knowledge and skills in critical care nursing and prepare me for the next phase of my career.

For the mid-term goals, which span the next 1-3 years, I plan to pursue additional specialization in transplant nursing and gain experience in a transplant center setting. This will allow me to expand my

expertise in a specialized area of nursing and contribute to the field of transplantation. I need to complete advanced certification courses and receive my CCRN in order to apply to CRNA schools, and my prior experience in critical care will help me with that. I aim to enhance my leadership skills by participating in management training programs and engaging in research projects related to critical care and transplantation. These activities will enable me to develop a well-rounded skill set and contribute to advancements in the field.

Looking ahead to the long term, which encompasses a timeframe of 3-5 years, my ultimate goal is to apply for a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) program. This program will provide me with the necessary knowledge and skills to administer anesthesia to individuals undergoing life-saving transplants. Upon completion of the program and obtaining certification, I aspire to work as a CRNA in a transplant center. While I have my heart set on working with transplant patients, I am open to working with all patients once I obtain my CRNA. I know that my path may vary, and I might make new goals along the way. I plan to engage in professional organizations related to critical care and anesthesia, allowing me to stay connected with the latest advancements and contribute to the field through collaboration and knowledge sharing.

To achieve these goals, I have outlined specific strategies and action steps. These include researching and identifying reputable certification courses and conferences in critical care nursing, creating a study plan to allocate dedicated time for studying and attending courses/workshops, seeking mentorship from experienced critical care nurses and transplant nurses, networking with professionals in the field, and staying updated with advancements in critical care practices through journals and online resources. I also plan to actively participate in research projects and present findings at conferences to contribute to the body of knowledge in critical care and transplantation. Next, I will research CRNA programs and their admission requirements, prepare for admission exams and interviews, and seek guidance from CRNAs and professionals in anesthesia.

To ensure accountability and progress, I have set deadlines for each milestone. These include completing advanced certification courses within the next year, attending at least one conference/workshop annually, starting specialization in transplant nursing within the next 1-2 years, applying for a CRNA program within the next 3 years, completing the CRNA program within 5 years, and starting to work as a CRNA in a transplant center. By diligently following this plan and implementing the outlined strategies, I am confident that I will enhance my knowledge, skills, and experience in critical care nursing. This will enable me to pursue a successful and fulfilling career path in the field of transplantation and anesthesia, where I can make a meaningful difference in the lives of patients.