“Promoting Educational Excellence: **Best Practices, Best Results**”
OVERVIEW OF THE ACCREDITING BUREAU OF HEALTH EDUCATION SCHOOLS

Formed in 1964 as the Accrediting Bureau of Medical Laboratory Schools, the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) has undergone tremendous growth and enhancements to its operations and scope of accreditation activity since its inception. It has been recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education since 1968 and has successfully achieved both continued recognition and expansions of scope over the years. The requirements for attainment of recognition by the U.S. Secretary of Education are identical to those required of all accrediting agencies; whether regional, national, or specialized.

**Mission, Goals and Objectives**

ABHES’ stated mission is to enhance the quality of education and training and promote institutional and programmatic accountability through systematic and consistent program evaluation. The key to ABHES’ mission is to assure the quality of the programs it accredits and assist in the improvement of the programs. This quality-determination is accomplished by rigorous and systematic evaluation based on valid standards.

ABHES’ goals and objectives focus on three key areas: recognition, resources, and service; all of which ABHES believes are essential and paramount to the achievement of its mission.

**Scope of Recognition**

As the only accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education that specializes in health education, ABHES accredits both on the institutional and programmatic basis. Specifically, it accredits private, postsecondary institutions in the United States offering predominantly health education and programmatically accredits Medical Assistant, Medical Laboratory Technology, and Surgical Technology programs. ABHES accredits from the certificate through baccalaureate degree as well as programs offered via distance education.
Other Recognition
ABHES holds a number of significant recognitions, including the following:

- **American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)** graduates of ABHES-accredited medical assistant programs are eligible to sit for the Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) examination. Candidates who graduate from a medical assisting program that is not CAAHEP or ABHES accredited on the date of graduation but receives accreditation within 36 months of graduation are eligible to apply under Category 1 or 2. Visit www.aama-ntl.org for additional information.

- **American Medical Technologists (AMT)** graduates of ABHES-accredited institutions and programs are eligible to sit for a variety of credentialing examinations provided by the AMT, including the Registered Medical Assistant (RMA) examination, the Registered Dental Assistant (RDA) examination, and the Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT) examination.

- **National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA)** graduates of ABHES-accredited surgical technology programs are eligible to sit for the Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) examination. Students enrolled at the time of the site visit will be considered graduates of an ABHES-accredited program, assuming the program becomes accredited. Visit www.nbstsa.org for additional information.

- **National League of Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLN-AC)** The National League of Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLN-AC) recognizes ABHES as an accrediting agency for the accreditation of nursing programs. This recognition allows ABHES-accredited institutions to apply for programmatic accreditation by the NLN-AC for their nursing programs.

Membership
ABHES also holds a number of memberships in organizations focused on accreditation, credentialing, and health care education, including the following:

- **The Association of Specialized & Professional Accreditors (ASPA)** ABHES is a long-time member of ASPA, an organization that supports the importance of specialized and professional accreditation. A primary mission of ASPA is the advancement of the knowledge, skills, good practices, and ethical commitments of its recognized accreditors.
• The Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions (ASAHP)
ABHES is proud to be a member of this long-standing, non-profit professional association that strives to be recognized as the unifying voice and learning advocate for allied health education.

• The Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) Established in 1977, ABHES is a long-time member of ICE (formerly the National Organization for Competency Assurance, or NOCA), the leader in setting quality standards for credentialing organizations. Through its annual conference, regional seminars, and publications, ICE serves its membership as a clearinghouse for information on the latest trends and issues of concern to practitioners and organizations focused on certification, licensure, and human resource development.

THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF ACCREDITATION

What is accreditation?
Accreditation is a non-governmental, professional peer review process by which educational institutions and programs are provided technical assistance and are evaluated for quality based on pre-established academic and administrative standards. Accreditation is used by the public as the most reliable indicator of educational quality.

Why ABHES?
One of the primary goals of ABHES accreditation is to assist institutions and programs in identifying and achieving goals in order to enhance the profession served. Accreditation by ABHES means that each individual program has received a comprehensive review by an experienced and appropriately credentialed program specialist and that the outcome of this review has been considered by peers and the ABHES Board of Commissioners for accreditation.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, industries and occupations related to health care, personal care and social assistance, and construction are projected to have the fastest job growth between 2010 and 2020 (Economic News Release, Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 1, 2012.) Reasons for the increased demand for healthcare employees include an aging population and longer life expectancies that will drive the employment growth.

With its numerous recognitions including that of credentialing agencies, the importance of ABHES accreditation cannot be understated. This is demonstrated by the agency’s growth in the number of accredited institutions and programs, nearly doubling, between 2000 and 2011.
What else does ABHES offer?

• A dedicated group of commissioners possessing diverse educational and experiential backgrounds in health care, accreditation, and institutional administration.

• A professional and experienced staff, many with several years with ABHES, and others with additional years of accreditation and/or education experience.

• A pool of well-trained, experienced, and necessarily credentialed program specialists to evaluate and assist programs.

• A diverse body of committee members and advisors focused towards institutional and programmatic best practices to assure quality education for the student body served.

• An understanding of commonly-accepted requirements and trends in various health care fields.

• Regular monitoring of legal and regulatory health care-related federal and state matters, affecting such things as transferability of credit, credentialing, and employment.

• Electronic alerts pertaining to important matters affecting ABHES-accredited institutions and programs.

• A cadre of dedicated volunteers from higher education, accreditation, and health care communities.

• The annual National Conference on Allied Health Education, sponsored by ABHES, bringing together its accredited institutions and programs, commissioners and staff, volunteers, credentialing agencies, federal and state regulators, publishers, and other key constituents focused on quality health care education.
OVERVIEW OF THE ABHES ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

ABHES accreditation standards and procedures are outlined in its Accreditation Manual and serve as a guide for the ABHES on-site evaluation team that review and assess the institution or program, for the peer reviewers who evaluate all components of the application, and for the commissioners who act on the application for accreditation. Institutions and programs seeking accreditation or those accredited by ABHES must comply with policies, procedures, and standards for accreditation set forth by ABHES in its Accreditation Manual.

The following steps are to be followed for application to ABHES:

1. **Retrieve Application Packet**
   Visit www.abhes.org, Accreditation Process, to learn how to apply for accreditation with guidance for downloading necessary applications and forms.

2. **Application Submission**
   Once you are able to demonstrate that your institution or program meets the Basic Eligibility criteria (Chapter II of the Accreditation Manual) and your institution or program is ready to apply for accreditation, complete the Application for Accreditation and submit it along with the other required documents outlined in the instructional letter referenced in Step 1.

3. **Self-Evaluation Report Completion**
   Upon receipt of the completed application packet and confirmation that the institution or program meets the eligibility criteria, the institution will be provided the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) for completion. There are two SER deadlines each year for initial and recycle applicants in preparation for the two annual commission meetings.

4. **Accreditation Workshop Attendance**
   Applicants are required to attend an Accreditation Workshop prior to submission of the SER. (See www.abhes.org (Events) to access date and locations.)

5. **Preliminary Visit (new institutional applicants only)**
   Initial institutional applicants are required to undergo a preliminary visit to confirm eligibility and to ascertain substantial compliance with the accreditation standards in preparation to undergo an on-site team visit. A draft copy of the narrative portion of the SER is required to be submitted prior to the visit for staff review.
The on-site evaluation team and ABHES commissioners will base their judgments, in part, on the SER. The self-evaluation questions and evaluation standards are arranged consistently so that the answers can easily be paired with the questions. The institution’s SER, including the narrative and exhibits, is submitted electronically to ABHES with specific direction provided. Visit the ABHES Website at www.abhes.org (Forms) to access institutional submission requirements.

7. On-Site Evaluation Team Review
Upon receipt of the SER, a staff member will contact the institution to schedule the on-site evaluation. On-site evaluations are mostly scheduled for two days and the team composition is determined by the number of programs offered by the institution. Each team consists of a team leader, program specialist(s), and an ABHES staff member. The institution is required to submit copies of the SER to the evaluation team, including the ABHES staff member, electronically, approximately one month prior to the site visit. Visit the ABHES Website at www.abhes.org (Forms) to access institutional submission requirements.

8. Institutional Response
Accrediting procedures provide an institution and program the opportunity to respond to the on-site evaluation reports, concentrating specifically on noted areas of noncompliance or violations, if any. The primary purpose of this step is to provide the institution or program an opportunity to document changes made by the institution or program and to demonstrate current and ongoing compliance with the cited noncompliance as noted in the on-site evaluation report(s).

9. Commission Review
The Commission meets at least twice per year to review all information pertinent to the pending application, including the institution’s or program’s SER, team report, and institutional response to the team reports. The Commission’s decision is then provided to the applicant in writing following the Commission meeting.

10. Annual Report
Upon receipt of a grant of accreditation, institutions are required to complete an Annual Report for the most recent ABHES reporting period, July 1 to June 30. The institutions are required to report its activities within the given timeframe and are required to submit an annual sustaining fee based on gross annual tuition (institutional) or annual total program enrollment (programmatic) (See Fee Schedule.)
IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

Accreditation by ABHES signifies that the institution or program has met each eligibility criterion and each evaluation standard of ABHES as demonstrated during a comprehensive on-site evaluation. Maintenance of accreditation requires continued compliance with the policies, procedures, and standards established by ABHES.

While ABHES holds a number of critical recognitions, ABHES accreditation does not guarantee access to Federal Title IV or other student financial aid eligibility, credentialing opportunities for graduates, or the ability to transfer credits to other institutions. It is the responsibility of each institution and program accredited by ABHES, and individuals seeking to train at an ABHES-accredited institution or program, to explore all necessary aspects and options associated with their objectives.

For additional information on ABHES, please visit www.abhes.org or contact the ABHES office at info@abhes.org or by phone at 703.917.9503. (See Accreditation Manual, Fee appendix)

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