



# CLINICAL LADDER for the **SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST**

*A win-win for professional development*

## BROADER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SURGICAL TECHNOLOGISTS. BETTER RETENTION RATES FOR THEIR HOSPITAL EMPLOYERS.

### Who is AST?

The Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) facilitates the approval and processing of your continuing education (CE) credits toward your credential renewal through the NBSTSA.

#### Association of Surgical Technologists

6 West Dry Creek Circle, Ste 200

Littleton, CO 80120-8031

800-637-7433

[www.ast.org](http://www.ast.org)

Business Hours:

8 am to 4:30 pm MDT

Monday-Friday



### Who is The NBSTSA?

The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) administers the national certification exams and issues the credential for CSTs and CSFAs.

#### The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting

3 West Dry Creek Circle

Littleton, CO 80120-8031

800-707-0057

[www.nbstsa.org](http://www.nbstsa.org)

Business hours:

8 am to 5:30 pm MDT

Monday-Friday

Cert no. SW-COC-001530



### That's the win/win reality of this clinical ladder.

Experienced surgical technologists represent an exceptional value in today's risk-averse, quality-seeking, outcome-driven health care environment. The same expertise that makes them an asset to hospital success, however, makes them strong candidates for medical sales and travel companies. By offering and supporting a Clinical Ladder specifically for surgical technologists, OR managers have an edge in keeping the best team members. And qualified technologists see just where this valuable career can take them.

A clinical ladder serves as an incentive for surgical technologists to continually improve their knowledge, skills and competency. It allows them to become involved with decision-making activities and encourages holistic thinking, broadening their view of being an integral part of the process of surgical patient care. It gives new staff a clear picture of how to advance in the organization. The result is a highly skilled and knowledgeable surgical technologist with diverse skills, both surgical and nonsurgical.

Surgery departments benefit in a number of ways. Hospital departments are constantly asked to take on additional duties with the same amount of staff. Clinical ladders help the surgical technologist develop multiple skills. Since precepting, orienting new staff and providing inservice education is usually included as part of the criteria for reaching the top rung of the ladder, the department and the hospital benefit from a wider pool of qualified surgical technologists to fulfill these tasks.

A clinical ladder provides managers with an effective tool for measuring the ongoing progress of the surgical technologists from one level to another. In doing so, they are not only recognizing and rewarding job excellence, but helping to recruit and retain surgical technologists.

\* CST® and CSFA® are registered trademarks of the NBSTSA.



### GOALS OF THE CLINICAL LADDER FOR THE SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST

- ▲ To enhance quality surgical patient care
- ▲ To encourage employer recognition and rewarding of advanced competency
- ▲ To promote the accountability and responsibility of the surgical technologist toward the patient
- ▲ To encourage the professional growth of the surgical technologist
- ▲ To encourage experienced surgical technologists to contribute toward the professional growth of the other members of the surgical team
- ▲ To increase the visibility of the role of the surgical technologist in the hospital and other institutions

#### Level I: Entry-Level Practitioner

A Level I practitioner is a practitioner who has recently graduated from a CAAHEP-accredited program and has been employed for one year or less. During the surgical rotation portion of the program, the graduate will have completed a minimum of 80 surgical procedures in the role of first scrub. An emphasis will have been placed upon the student completing basic, intermediate and advanced procedures in all surgical specialties.

1. Graduate of CAAHEP-accredited surgical technology program.
2. Independently first scrubs basic surgical procedures in all surgical specialties.
3. Demonstrates ability to problem-solve in relation to the procedure being performed.
4. Applies base knowledge of anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, microbiology, and pharmacology for optimal surgical patient care.
5. Applies basic knowledge of computers, electricity and robotics.
6. Demonstrates knowledge and practice of patient care concepts.
7. Applies the principles of sterile technique during surgical procedures.
8. Participates in orientation and training program to attain competency in complex cases and achieve
9. Becomes certified within one year of graduation.
10. Maintains certification by participating in continuing education activities.

#### Level II: Proficient Practitioner

Level II is a Certified Surgical Technologist who has been employed for one year or more and takes on greater responsibility in providing patient care. Level II practitioners demonstrate higher-level critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

1. Meets the criteria stated in Level I.
2. Demonstrates advanced knowledge and proficient practice in the first scrub role in the majority of surgical procedures.

3. Applies knowledge of advanced surgical techniques.
4. Applies knowledge related to emergency situations and surgical procedures in the operating room.
5. Demonstrates critical-thinking skills in relation to anticipating the perioperative needs of the patient and surgeon.
6. Exhibits a higher level of collaboration with peers in making decisions related to surgical patient care.
7. Assists in performing circulating skills and tasks.
8. Participates in program to achieve Level III: Expert Practitioner.

### Level III: Expert Practitioner

Level III is an advanced practitioner who participates in endeavors related to, but also outside of the surgery department. 1. Meets the criteria stated in Level II.

2. Serves as a mentor and role model.
3. Performs the preceptor role in training students.
4. Member of at least one department or healthcare facility committee, such as Laser Safety, Process Improvement, or Emergency Response Committee.
5. Demonstrates superior knowledge of expert practice in the first scrub role in advanced surgical procedures.
6. Involved with volunteer community health promotional efforts and other related volunteer community services.
7. Demonstrates superior knowledge of the various surgical equipment, supplies, and advanced surgical instrumentation.
8. Develops, organizes, and delivers continuing education presentations, such as in-services for healthcare facility employees, or at AST events, such as state assembly meetings or annual conferences.
9. Performs the role of surgical specialty team leader that includes but is not limited to:
  - a. ordering equipment, instruments, and supplies,
  - b. training CSTs to be a member of the surgical specialty team,
  - c. ensuring equipment is in working order or needs to be sent to the biomedical department for repair, and
  - d. confirming the equipment, instruments, and supplies for the scheduled surgical procedures are available, including third-party instrumentation has been delivered and processed through the central sterile supply department,
  - e. possibly being responsible for maintaining updates of the surgeon's preference cards.

### Level IV: Leadership

Level IV is an advanced practitioner who has developed the knowledge and skills to be a leader in the perioperative setting. Examples include supervisor of a central sterile supply department or surgery department or clinical educator.

1. Meets the criteria stated in Level III.
2. Demonstrates leadership skills including but not limited to:
  - a. strategic thinking skills,
  - b. strong communications skills to include active listening skills,
  - c. coordinating the effective use of equipment and supplies in the department,
  - d. organizing and coordinating the effective use of personnel in the department,
  - e. encouraging positive and transparent communication among department personnel,
  - f. ability to align the personnel with the goals of the department and create unity within the workplace, and
  - g. ability to motivate and inspire others including connecting and engaging with the department personnel.
3. Makes the safety and well-being of department personnel a top priority.
4. Includes department personnel in decision making when necessary.
5. Chair of one or more department or healthcare facility committees.
6. Develops department budgetary requirements to include purchasing equipment, instruments, and supplies as well as staffing needs.
7. In a leadership role, advocates for and promotes the professions of Certified Surgical Technologist (CST™) and Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA™).
  - a. Remains current in their knowledge of the AST Guidelines for Best Practices in Surgical Technology.