

Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation  
Employee of the Year  
Medical & Behavioral Health Division

Correctional nursing is a challenging nursing specialty that requires flexibility, attention to detail, critical thinking, strong clinical decision making, and a sound grasp of the nursing standards of professional practice. Nurse Gladys Onokoko-Othepa, RN embodies the compassion, empathy, commitment, competence, dedication and professionalism that are hallmarks of the nursing profession. Nurse Gladys joined DOCR in May 2017 with extensive acute nursing prior experience in the hospital setting. Starting on the MCCF night shift, she chose to remain on the MCCF night shift in subsequent bid years, even as she gained seniority and had the option to transition to more highly coveted day shift roles. She explained that her fellow night shift nurse and officer colleagues were the reason she wanted to remain on night shift. Nurse Gladys is a shining example of the importance of nursing and correctional staff working together collaboratively to simultaneously achieve both custody and health care goals.

In 2019, Gladys firmly established herself as a leader among her nursing peers as she enthusiastically trained new merit, pool, and agency nurses. She patiently worked with a rotating complement of night shift nurse partners when her nurse teammate's position was vacant for an extended period of time. Nurse Gladys could always be relied upon to provide safe and competent nursing care and education, respond to emergencies, and advocate for the healthcare needs of her patients. Nurse Gladys had a keen sense of when a patient's healthcare needs required medical attention beyond the capabilities of the jail and skillfully coordinated hospital transfers when indicated. As a dedicated patient advocate, Nurse Gladys proactively communicated with the receiving hospital nurses to ensure optimal continuity of care between the jail and the hospital. Nurse Gladys could be relied upon to work autonomously while still keeping the nurse managers updated on all significant events that transpired on the medical unit during the overnight hours.

As a voice for her patients and her teammates, Nurse Gladys distinguished herself on multiple occasions in 2019 with her strong communication and advocacy skills. Concerned about the continued decline of a patient, she passionately advocated for additional medical review of the patient's medical history and treatment plan. When conducting and rendering a second opinion of this case as requested, the regional medical director for the DOCR physician contractor gave high praise for Nurse Gladys' nursing assessment skills and documentation. When the medical management team sought feedback from nurses, Nurse Gladys was often the first to respond with thoughtful and insightful suggestions on ways to improve processes and working conditions for her fellow nurses. Nurse Gladys worked closely with both the medical and custody and security management teams to modify the early morning insulin administration process resulting in optimal diabetic patient care while also ensuring nurse safety in the correctional setting.

Nurse Gladys Onokoko-Othepa's outstanding work performance and contributions in 2019 epitomized the essence of correctional nursing and devoted public safety service.