

VA/MD/DC WIC Dietetic Internship

PRECEPTOR HANDBOOK

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About the VA/MD/DC WIC Dietetic Internship

The Virginia Department of Health Dietetic Internship Program is granted continued accreditation by The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Academy). The United States Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognize programs that are accredited by ACEND. This recognition affirms that ACEND meets national standards for a quality education in dietetics and nutrition. ACEND exists to serve the public by establishing and enforcing eligibility requirements and accreditation standards that ensure the quality and continued improvement of nutrition and dietetics education programs.

The VA/MD/DC WIC Dietetic Internship (“Program”) is unique in multiple aspects.

- Interns must have been employed in VA, MD, or DC WIC ; 1 year.
- Interns complete their community rotation part time while working equally part time in their WIC clinic, clinical and foodservice rotations are completed full time as the interns are able to utilize educational leave
- After successful passing of the CDR credentialing exam, interns are required to work for their local agency; 1.5 year for VA interns, 2 years for MD and DC interns.

The internship is 1000 hours in total. The hours are organized as follows:

- 440 hours in Public Health
- 200 hours in Foodservice Management
- 360 hours in Clinical Nutrition
- Supervised practice hours are the hours you experience on site (in person) with a preceptor in a rotation.

There is very minimal leeway for remote rotations. You do not have to complete any remote rotations. If you do, of the 1000 hours listed, only 300 can be in alternate supervised experiences, such as simulations, case studies, or role plays.

Please see the DI website for further information: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/wic-dietetic-internship/>

Program Policies

An electronic copy of the Program Policies and Procedures Manual is available to preceptors and interns at all times through Sharepoint. A hard copy can be furnished upon request to the Director or Coordinator.

Required Assignments and Evaluations

The Program has determined required activities which are designed to meet the ACEND practice competencies for entry level dietitians.

Successful demonstration of entry level competence through the completion of the outlined competency-associated activities is a joint responsibility of the Program, the intern, and the preceptor. **Refer to Appendix A, Class Syllabus**, for a list of required assignments and activities during each rotation.

Evaluations are a critical component to the integrity of the Program as well as the professional development of the intern. Evaluations are to be completed twice during each rotation, once at the midpoint and reviewed with the intern and once at the end of the rotation. Evaluations are the responsibility of the primary preceptor as well as the intern. Failure to complete the required evaluations may result in verification statement delay. **Refer to Appendix B for evaluation material.** Evaluations are available in electronic fillable-PDF format for preceptors to complete.

Preceptors are urged not to wait until an evaluation to bring up concerns of an intern's performance. Interns should be regularly counseled on professional performance in order to understand what improvements need to be made. Interns who are not progressing to entry level performance should be immediately brought to the attention of program administrators. **Hours Verification Form (Appendix C)** must be submitted after completing each rotation.

General Requirements for Preceptors

The Program requires that every facility have at least one individual who is designated to act as the primary preceptor overseeing the intern during supervised practice.

- Preceptors must submit a **Preceptor Qualification Form (Appendix D)**
- The Preceptor must be a full-time employee at the selected facility.
 - The primary Preceptor may be a part-time employee if a qualified secondary preceptor is available to supervise the intern when the primary Preceptor is not available.
- Preceptors should be in their position for at least one year prior to accepting an intern.
- Preceptors must be appropriately and adequately licensed or credentialed relative to their work.
- Preceptors must show evidence of continued competence appropriate to their supervising responsibilities through professional work, graduate education, continuing education, scholarship/research or other activities leading to professional growth in the advancement of their profession.

General Requirements for Facilities

Throughout the program interns will gain experience in multiple different types of facilities in which Registered Dietitians work. The program defines facilities which would host an intern for supervised practice into four categories:

Primary Clinical Facility: An acute care facility with an intensive care unit (ICU), rehabilitation unit, med/surg unit, cardiology service, and gastroenterology service. JCAHO Accredited for at least the past 5 years. The facility should have at minimum two full time dietitians for the inpatient setting. The Preceptor must be a Registered Dietitian with the Commission on Dietetic Registration with a minimum of one-year of work experience after credentialing. The preceptor must be licensed or credentialed, as appropriate, to meet state and federal regulations.

Non-Primary Clinical Facility: A freestanding clinic, treatment facility, or specialty practice with at minimum one part time credentialed Dietitian who has been in practice for at minimum one year and ideally holds a specialty credential relative to the practice the population serves. Facility must be appropriately licensed according to local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Intern may not complete greater than 40 hours of supervised practice in a non-primary facility, unless given approval from program administrators.

Foodservice Management Facility: School food-service, University Dining Services, commercial foodservice, or a health care facility. The Preceptor must be a food service director or supervisor. Interns are encouraged to seek foodservice rotations through School Foodservice programs as it relates most directly to the mission of the program.

Public Health Programs: A program which operates under the mission to provide a service to the community which targets a public health issue. May be privately or publicly funded and not required to employ an RD or LDN. Not intended to provide the intern with more than 40 hours of supervised practice, unless given approval from program administrators. No affiliation agreement required.

Affiliated sites will be evaluated for continued appropriateness at least once in the period in which an intern is present. Sites which are deemed not to be sufficient for interns will be counseled on methods to improve inadequate areas. If a site is deemed insufficient to the point where it should not be hosting an intern the intern will be given additional time to repeat the portion of the rotation in which they were not sufficiently supervised. This will be evaluated and handled on a case-by-case basis.

Preceptor Responsibilities

- Be familiar with program competencies, evaluation tools, and program layout
- [Link to acend comps 2022](#)
- Have adequate time to supervise an intern, and open to answering interns' questions
- **Be comfortable in providing professional feedback to the intern in a timely manner**

- Preceptors are urged not to wait until an evaluation to bring up concerns of an intern's performance. Interns should be regularly counseled on professional performance in order to understand what improvements need to be made.
- Ensure that the facility and scope of practice within the facility allow for completion of either all outlined rotation specific activities and competencies or clearly outline specific activities or competencies that can be completed within the facility
- Agree to abide by the policies outlined by the program
- Understand and adhere to the interns' role as a student and not an employee or support personnel unless the activity is to demonstrate entry level proficiency
- To score interns based on ability to demonstrate entry level competence, but not grade assignments, activities, or projects

Program Responsibilities

- Provide rotation specific activities which enable the intern to demonstrate competence required for an entry level dietitian ([see syllabus](#))
- Review all assignments
- Review all evaluations
- Track intern progress
- Be available to both interns and preceptors to provide guidance and consultation as is necessary or needed. Preceptors and interns should never hesitate to contact the program for support.

Intern Responsibilities

- Follow all program policies and procedures
- Communicate effectively with preceptors and program faculty
- Be on time, prepared, and participate fully
- Maintain a positive and open attitude
- Communicate with preceptor to stay on schedule
- Accept constructive criticism
- Assume responsibility for performance both as a professional and as a student
- Prepare to learn by completing modules, case studies, and independent study or reading in order to not rely on the preceptor to teach material which could be regarded as general knowledge for DPD program graduates
- Be aware of and follow facility policies and procedures
- Be responsive to communications from preceptors

Tips for Working with Interns

- Orient the intern to Policies & Procedures (highlighting cell phone policy), Campus map, personnel, daily schedules (arrival, breaks), dress code, resources available to intern (library, office space, computers, reference materials, etc.)

- Define expectations and ground rules
- Explain and demonstrate the norm for the work
- Ask the intern what they are looking to accomplish – be direct on what you/your facility is able to provide

Recommended Teaching Model

Preceptors may choose to implement the teaching model with which they are most comfortable. The Program has provided the following outline of a basic teaching model as an optional reference for preceptors.

1. **Demonstrate**
Before allowing the student to observe, give a brief explanation of the approach, steps, or system. After the student has observed this in action, discuss if they understood the approach, steps, or system. Discuss variations and rationale.
2. **Rehearse**
Role-play with the student after multiple observations have taken place. Role play can be through the student writing mock assessments and care plans or providing mock education. Rehearsal may include additional study, observation, and independent education and should be assigned by the preceptor on an as needed basis.
3. **Evaluate**
Be specific and clear of how the feedback and correction will benefit them professionally. Outline how the student may achieve correction and when you observe the correction in action give positive feedback. Preceptors may find it useful to demonstrate or role play the correction.
4. **Independent Practice**
Students must be allowed to sink or swim either under observation or through reporting back. This allows students to apply their learned knowledge and skills and promotes their professional development. Give clear parameters and deadlines for tasks.
5. **Assess**
Through audit or observation assess the students' proficiency in the assigned independent practice tasks. Provide feedback. Repeat as necessary.
6. **Autonomy**
As the student progresses professionally, provide increased autonomy in tasks and/or greater responsibility in scope of tasks. Allow the student to bring questions and concerns to you. Provide more challenging experiences.
7. **Affirm and Provide Constructive Feedback**

Troubleshooting

Preceptors will likely identify areas of weakness or concern. Although some may find it confrontational, these concerns or observations should be brought to the intern's attention soon after identification. Many find it useful to present difficult feedback or criticism if there is a regular evaluation time pre-arranged. Waiting until the final evaluation is not an ideal way to provide feedback and illicit behavior change.

The program has outlined optional responses or approaches to common issues. Preceptors are encouraged to reach out to Program administrators for clarification, support, or additional ideas.

Time management and organizational issues

- Require the intern to maintain a schedule with task prioritization
- Schedule weekly or daily check-ins to track progress
- Identify the weakness and demonstrate what you find to be effective for managing time and maintaining organization

Basic Knowledge or Skill Deficit

- Recommend independent learning activities for the student
- Ask the student to present results of independent learning task
- Alert Program administration if this is a recurring problem or does not improve

Difficulty or reluctance in learning a new skill

- Encourage role playing to reinforce new skill
- Provide specific feedback
- Alert Program administration if reluctance does not resolve

Not progressing to independency in practice

- Start with small independent tasks to build confidence
- Offer positive feedback when appropriate
- Provide regular evaluation

Stress management

- Relay how you de-stress
- Encourage time management and organization to reduce stress
- Encourage stress management activities
- Alert Program Administration if stress level regularly impedes daily tasks

Conflicts with staff members

- Address the problem directly
- Remind the intern of professional behavior standards and expectations
- Provide examples of alternative behaviors
- If significant, ask intern to leave for the day and call Program administrator

Failure to accept or respond to feedback or criticism

- Contact Program administrators
- Request that intern take leave from the rotation until a performance improvement plan is developed by the intern and agreed to by the preceptor

Appendices

A: [Class Syllabus](#)

B: Evaluations

C: Hour Verification Form

D: Preceptor Information Form