

Guidelines for Selecting Appropriate Preceptors and Precepting Sites

The **practice site/ facility** is an organization or business that provides the opportunity for the intern to complete the required supervised practice such as a hospital, a public health agency, a university dining center, or a long-term care facility.

You must submit one separate completed and signed Facility Form (see website) for each Practice Site/ Facility where you will undertake a supervised practice experience of one week or more. The preceptor or representative identified for the facility should complete the facility form. Only *one* Facility form is needed per site. **Please note that affiliation agreements will be required between ISU and the practice site/facility.** These agreements will be completed between Iowa State University legal counsel and the practice site/facility after the intern has been matched to the program. Occasionally some facilities prefer to use their own version of an agreement, in that case the legal counsel of ISU and the practice site/facility attempt work together to reach agreement. Unfortunately not all affiliation agreements will be successfully negotiated; therefore the applicant is strongly advised to select more than one facility especially for MNT rotations. The ISU affiliation agreement is located on the website.

A "preceptor" is an expert or specialist, such as a Registered Dietitian, who provides practical experience and training to a dietetic intern. Examples of experts or specialists include Registered Dietitians (RD), Registered Nurses (RN), and food service director.

In the internship, it is suggested you have *at least 4 preceptors* (more is acceptable):

- 2 RD preceptors in the Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) rotation
- 1 RD preceptor in the Community Nutrition (COM) rotation.
- 1 preceptor in the Management (FSM) rotation. While it is preferable to have at least one RD preceptor in the Management (FSM) rotation this may not be feasible. If there is not a RD in the FSM rotation, select an appropriate professional in the area such as the department director or the program coordinator.

You must submit one separate completed and signed Preceptor Form (see website) for each Preceptor who will be supervising your experience. The preceptor should complete the form and attach resume.

Each preceptor must complete and submit the required documentation in order for the applicant to be considered for the internship.

Here are **things to consider when identifying Practice Sites/ Facilities** for various types of practice experiences. When trying to find supervised practice sites/ facilities, remember that these practice sites ideally should be large enough to have several full-time RDs. Talk with the RDs who have agreed to serve as your preceptors. They should be able to guide you in approaching hospital administrators and agency directors.

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) (650 hours or 11 weeks + 2 weeks Staff Relief = 13 weeks): The ideal hospital facility would have a wide variety of acute, chronic, and outpatient services as well as the full-range of foodservice operations. The usual inpatient census should be at least 50 and there should be at least 2 full-time RDs; this provides you the opportunity to learn different styles of professional skills. An internship may already be in place in a larger hospital. You are more likely to find small community hospitals or long term care facilities with sub-acute units agreeable to sponsor you. We have not found any difference in pass rate on the RD exam or job placement as a result of completing clinical experiences in a smaller facility. Here are minimum needs for supervised practice facility for MNT rotations:

- Each facility should be currently accredited by the appropriate agency—such as JACHO,DNV, or the state.
- Each facility should be licensed for at least 50 bed inpatient census.
- Each facility should have at least 2 RDs who work with MNT patient care.
- Advanced practice rotations might occur in other facilities. These topic areas include Pediatrics, Renal, and Nutrition Support. It is not uncommon to complete most of the MNT rotations in one facility, then experiences at other facilities to complete the advanced topic areas.
- The MNT facility may be the same as the FSM facility.

Community (COM) (250 hours or WIC: 1 week, Other: 4 weeks): The ideal community agencies (Office for the Aging, Long-term Care, and Public Health) would be involved in broad planning and management of food and nutrition services as well as direct client care.

- Interns are should plan to complete at least 4-5 days in an actual WIC clinic
- Interns complete a service learning project (SLP) during the COM rotation. This project can occur in a many different types of facilities and agencies such as: public health department, WIC agency, Elderly Care facility, a corporate setting, OR the MNT facility or the FSM facility. Time for the SLP is scheduled during COM rotation however the project is not required to be a COM topic.
- Interns are not required to spend the entire COM rotation at a WIC agency.
- The COM preceptors may include other professionals than RDs for preceptors...consider RNs, social workers and other experts or specialists.

Food Service Management (FSM) internship experiences (250 hours or 5 weeks).

- There may not be an RD on staff with whom to complete the supervised practice requirements however there will be appropriate professionals such as the department director or the head supervisor.
- If you have selected a smaller facility, it may be necessary for you to complete a portion of this rotation in another facility.
- You must have experience with therapeutic diets in a hospital-like setting and public school foodservice (you may choose how this works out, i.e. 2 weeks in schools, 3 weeks in hospital FSM or 1 week in assisted living facility, 4 weeks in public schools or vice versa)
- The FSM facility may the same as the MNT facility.
- NOTE: There might be only ONE (1) preceptor in the PUBLIC SCHOOL FOODSERVICE rotation. This situation is acceptable.

Some tips as you contact potential preceptors:

- Start with contacts that you may currently have
- Have you worked or volunteered in a facility that has one or more RD's? Typically, the people for whom you have worked have a favorable impression of your ability and commitment to succeeding in a DI.
- Have you attended any meetings with RDs? Network with these individuals in your quest to find qualified RD preceptors.
- Have there been RD guest speakers in any of your classes?
- Once you have decided which dietitians to contact, call their offices and make an appointment to talk with them. Since there are forms to be completed and application materials to discuss, a face-to-face meeting is best.
- Even if these contacts do not agree to be your preceptors, they may know someone else whom you might approach.