

Student Tips for Success during Supervised Practice

| Progressive Steps Through Supervised Practice | Do | Don't |
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| Self-Assessment: Acceptance of Placement | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze your interests, values & goals & be certain your faculty advisor is fully aware of them. 2. Despite temporary placement & student status, regard yourself as a professional & a member of the staff. 3. Prepare yourself to expect & accept that problems & frustrations will occur. 4. When problems occur, be patient & pleasant; cope with problems with an attitude toward solution & negotiation. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not act as if you know all the answers. Remember, as a student, you are placed in the agency for a learning experience. 2. Do not let yourself become involved in internal conflicts |
| Routine Office Matters | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be sure to find out where you are to work—office, desk space, chair, telephone, etc. so you know your operational base. 2. Be aware of office practices regarding dress, protocol, office hours and flexibility, holidays. Follow rules set for regular staff. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not expect any special treatment. |
| Orientation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Request & read information you need regarding the organizational structure, names of key people, office policies & procedures to facilitate your orientation. 2. Determine what information you may need which has already been compiled. Find out who is knowledgeable in your own office and others. 3. Become familiar with the entire agency so you can see where you fit. <p>Review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Annual reports, program plans, program descriptions, etc. b. Budget documents c. Organization charts | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not take too long to familiarize yourself with the agency, staff, etc. 2. Do not let yourself "take sides" in office politics. 3. Do not be critical of the nutrition staff if documents & plans do not follow the format learned in school. The format & procedures for such documents as plans, budgets, etc. are usually dictated by the agency or a higher governmental entity. |
| Integrating into the New Environment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initially, learn to fit in by being formal toward everyone. Then gradually, depending upon the climate, establish friendships or at least pleasant working relationships with other employees. 2. Learn quickly, the people who facilitate the work-flow. 3. Attempt to gain an appreciation for the clerical and secondary functions of the agency, for they are the building blocks of the primary mission. A finished project can be delayed, altered, or expedited depending upon the inclination of the clerical staff! 4. Develop a list of persons to know in your working environment so when you need to contact them, you have their phone numbers. You may want to include other information, e.g., the context of your meeting, the date, the person's position, etc. 5. In order to become involved with the process of management, make an effort to attend meetings, be included on reading lists, and in other day-to-day management activities. 6. Record events that occur to assist with preparation of your documentation for the competencies (keep a daily journal of what you are doing and learning). | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not become so assertive as to threaten other employees; however, appear competent enough to establish a basis for receiving favorable recommendations. 2. Do not exercise authority. However, do be ready to offer suggestions. 3. Do not become "pigeon-holed", but attempt to expand your knowledge by contacting program managers in other divisions to gain insight into the organization as a whole. Contacting managers in other agency units or other agencies should always be coordinated through your preceptor. |

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| Prog Steps...(cont.) | Do | Don't |
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| Establishing the Task(s) & Assignments | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish the expectations, limitations, and directions of the competencies with your preceptor at the beginning of your rotation. 2. Evaluate your assignments in terms of the amount of time available during your rotation. 3. If occasionally asked to perform routine work, remain pleasant and complete the tasks. However, if a majority of your assignments constitute busywork, speak with your preceptor. If necessary, inform the Dietetic Internship Program director and ask for assistance. 4. Plan carefully around the time available to you so time limitations will not be a problem. Draw a time line so you and your supervisor will be able to realize the time required for an assignment. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not hesitate to contact the internship director if the experiences are not in line with the competencies. 2. If you feel a task is irrelevant, do not accept the task without asking questions about its relevance. However, do not ask questions in such a way as to be offensive. 3. Do not allow yourself to be overloaded with tasks no other staff member will do. 4. Once you have learned a procedure or task, do not be tempted to repeat it. Your mission is to move on and gain as much varied experience as possible. 5. Do not pretend you performed a certain type of task when, in fact, you have not; do not refrain from asking questions until you understand the task at hand. 6. If you leave an unfinished product, do not leave it in such a condition that no one else would be able to continue working with it. |
| Developing Student/Preceptor Rapport | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a good working relationship so you will be able to talk freely about what you are receiving or lacking from the experience. 2. Assure your field advisor you have a desire to learn and you are putting forth all efforts to make the experience worthwhile. 3. If you suffer from "lack of guidance", remedy the situation by either approaching your preceptor or dietetic internship director. However, it is necessary to respect the preceptor's extensive responsibilities and to be as understanding of his/her work schedule as he/she is of yours. 4. You should be innovative and not expect constant supervision. Be positive and demonstrate initiative. 5. With respect to your preceptor, remember he/she is responsible for your relations with other sections & departments. Make contacts pleasant, productive, and quick—not wanting to be the cause of any negative feelings between you and others. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not fail to have regularly-scheduled meetings with your field advisor so you can acquire feedback. |
| Vital Elements of Successful Experience | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do make the most of your situation. Gain as much experience and knowledge as possible, and at the same time make a meaningful contribution to the agency. 2. Follow through on whatever job you undertake; deadlines are important and should be strictly adhered to. 3. As a student, be aware that educational training is an important tool to be used in the working world. The classroom theories are helpful, but there are exceptions and situations that require flexibility and experience when putting book-learning to work in the "real world." 4. Develop and maintain careful, quality work habits. 5. Since staff may be busy, schedule meetings with individuals several days in advance. 6. Take advantage of training workshops offered inside and outside of the organization. 7. Keep a positive attitude and remember that new ideas take a long time to implement. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not become discouraged when your prepared reports go through a refining process when reviewed by staff. Remember, they are the experts and know what will get the job done. Your job is to gain experience and knowledge while keeping an open mind 2. Do not refrain from contributing. 3. Do not be defensive when you make mistakes. Mark it off as par for the course and continue on. Remember you are there to develop your talents and skills. 4. Do not allow yourself to become involved in issues which came to friction before you came on board, nor become involved in office politics (be an impartial observer). |
| Future Direction | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be aware of the possibility you may discover a change in your career objectives based upon your experiences. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not expect to be an expert upon completion of your supervised experiences. But do realize you will be "practice-ready" as an entry level dietitian. |

Adapted from Koehler, Cortus T.: The Intern and the Internship from Beginning to End, Teaching Pol. Sci., pp. 329-335, April, 1980.