



Dietetic Internship

Preceptor Handbook

2026-2027

Dear valued preceptor,

First and foremost, Diet To Lifestyle Dietetic Internship Program would like to thank you for your willingness to serve as a preceptor for dietetic interns. The experience can be challenging at times, but also very rewarding. Preceptors are essential for furthering the education of the next registered dietitians. You are making an impact in interns' lives and professions.

“Currently, for every qualified student who gets an internship rotation, another student will not, because too few practitioners have been willing to take on the role of preceptor. The profession needs more practitioners who are willing to train and serve as positive role models and preceptors to assure that all qualified students can complete their education. Preceptors are a vital resource for the dietetic professionals of the future.” –Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Sincerely,

The Diet To Lifestyle Dietetic Internship Leadership

DTL Dietetic Internship Mission Statement and Goals

Mission Statement

The mission of Diet To Lifestyle Dietetic Internship Program is to prepare graduates to become skilled registered dietitian nutritionists for leadership roles in the field of nutrition and dietetics and to enhance knowledge and skills in clinical judgement to improve health outcomes in various communities.

Program Goals and Objectives

Goal #1- Graduates will be prepared to successfully complete the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) credentialing exam to become entry-level registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs).

Objective 1.1 (DI only and self-identified graduate full-time) - At least 80% of program graduates complete program/degree requirements within 1.4 years (150% of the program length).

Objective 1.1 (DI only and self-identified graduate part-time) - At least 80% of program graduates complete program requirements within 2.25 years (150% of the program length).

Objective 1.1 (MS/DI full-time) - At least 80% of program graduates complete program requirements within 3.4 years (150% of the program length).

Objective 1.1 (MS/DI part-time) - At least 80% of program graduates complete program requirements within 4.5 years (150% of the program length).

Objective 1.2- Of graduates who seek employment, 80 percent are employed in nutrition and dietetics or related fields within 12 months of graduation”.

Objective 1.3- 80 percent of program graduates take the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists within 12 months of program completion”.

Objective 1.4- The program’s one-year pass rate (graduates who pass the registration exam within one year of first attempt) on the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists is at least 80%”.

Objective 1.5- At least 75% of graduates that complete the graduate survey will indicate that the program adequately prepared them for their first entry-level dietetics position rating at least a 3 (on a 4-point scale).

Objective 1.6- At least 75% of employers that complete the graduate survey will indicate graduates are prepared for entry-level practice rating at least a 3 (on a 4-point scale).

Goal #2- Graduates will be prepared to be highly competent leaders in the field of nutrition and dietetics. (Medical Nutrition Therapy, Entrepreneurship, and Community)

Objective 2.1- 50% of graduates will hold leadership roles in the field of nutrition and dietetics within 6 years of credentialing.

Objective 2.2- At least 10% of graduates will become entrepreneurs in the field of dietetics within 5 years.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRECEPTOR

Supervised practice is a component of dietetics education that cannot be replaced by didactic education and traditional exams. Supervised practice consists of providing interns with opportunities to practice dietetics-related activities under supervision. Interns can then build their skills, gradually increase complexity and quantity of work and apply theory to practice. Upon completion of the program, interns will have the skills necessary to function as competent, entry-level practitioners.

Other responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the intern to contact their preceptors prior to the start of the rotation to arrange a time and location. Preceptors are asked to respond to the interns and provide detailed instructions (directions, parking, etc.).
2. Preceptors are asked to fill out an intern evaluation form at the end of their rotation. The interns will complete a preceptor evaluation as well (See page 26). Ideally, these will be finished by the last day of the rotation to allow for verbal discussion and questions. Communicate with the Program Director promptly if concerns arise during the rotation.

Tips for Day One

1. Provide an orientation for the intern to the facility, unit and staff.
2. Explain the typical work day.
3. Establish ground rules including dress code, timing, reporting.
4. Explain what is expected of them as interns specific to your entity.
5. Obtain information from the interns about their experiences thus far and their expectations and goals for the rotation.
6. Review Unit Preparation Sheets if applicable.

Example: “As a clinical dietitian, I see a lot of patients with lung issues, heart failure, liver disease, infections, etc. My caseload is usually 10-12 patients per day and I always start my day with nutrition support patients. I have report at 8:30 am and usually take a lunch break around noon. What other rotations have you had so far? What types of experiences have you had? What are you hoping to get out of this rotation? What is your learning style? I will have you shadow me today and write some chart notes. Tomorrow we will see if you are comfortable enough to see a patient on your own. By the end of the week we will try and get you to the point where you are comfortable seeing at least 2-3 patients on your own. Does that plan sound okay? Do you have any questions or concerns?”

Role of a Preceptor

The Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) indicates the following are the most important roles of a good preceptor:

- Planner
- Role Model
- Information Provider
- Facilitator of Learning
- Resource Developer
- Assessor of Learning CDR.

Dietetics Preceptor Training Program [Online Module]. Retrieved from <https://acend-s-school.thinkific.com/courses/preceptor-training-course>

Training Versus Educating

It is important to note that there is a difference between training an intern to do your job and educating them on the concepts. Remember the goal is for the intern to be ready to be a competent entry-level dietitian by the end of the program, so they should understand the “why” as well as the “how.” You do not always have to readily explain the information; sometimes it’s beneficial to test their understanding first or to encourage them to find the answer on their own. Regardless, ensure that the intern is competent in the concepts behind why you do what you do by the end of the rotation.

Examples:

Training

- “food service managers work out of the offices end of the hallway.”

- “this is where you find the patient’s chemo-record.”

- “this is how you obtain a blood sample to find client’s hemoglobin level.”

Educating

- “the retail manager shares an office with the purchasing specialist because they need to communicate often in order to minimize food costs.”

- “if you see that a patient is receiving therapy chemotherapy, it is important to research the type, route and side effects so that you can best anticipate their nutritional needs.”

- “do you know why we are concerned about the hemoglobin levels of women, infants and children?”

How to Give and Receive Feedback Effectively

1. At the beginning of the rotation, remind students as specifically as possible what he/she is expected to know and to do.
2. Focus on observed behaviors that you personally witness rather than vague general impression.
3. If your sense of the student's knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies differ from those of other preceptors, you may want to discuss this with other preceptors prior to talking with the student
4. Back up comments with evidence and examples.
5. Share information in a timely manner – an intern should not hear about a concern for the first time at the end of the rotation during their evaluation.
6. Consider what the student noted in their self-assessment if applicable.
7. Identify strengths first, and then areas for improvement.
8. Plan for follow up throughout the rotation and develop an action plan if needed.

CDR. Dietetics Preceptor Training Program [Online Module]. Retrieved from <https://acend-s-school.thinkific.com/courses/preceptor-training-course>

***Diet To Lifestyle Dietetic Internship Leadership encourages preceptors to take some time at the beginning and halfway through the rotation to intentionally consider if there are any issues that need to be addressed, either with the intern or with the Program Director and to do so if needed. It is also recommended to set aside 10-15 minutes in the last day or two of the rotation to allow for verbal discussion about the intern's evaluation as well as the intern's evaluation of the preceptor and the rotation.**

Tips for Filling out an Intern Evaluation

1. **Read the definitions of the scoring first so you are familiar with the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, N/A system.**
2. **Be honest – it can be difficult to give negative feedback, but it is the only way that the intern has the potential to improve. It is also the best way for Internship Leadership to be aware of the interns' progress. It can help to use phrases such as, "What I appreciate about you is..." and "I feel you could be more effective if..."**
3. **Be specific - use evidence and examples in the comment sections.**

Internship Leadership would also like to remind preceptors how to accept constructive feedback. Preceptors should be curious. No one is perfect and feedback from interns is an opportunity to learn and grow as a professional. Also, it is also important that interns feel safe to give feedback. When receiving criticism as a preceptor, the following **ABC's** may foster a successful outcome:

Agree: agree with the intern on the parts of their criticism in which you agree.

Build: if you feel the intern has some feedback but is being passive, encourage them to communicate with you.

Compare: when you do not agree with all or portions of what the intern has said, do not tell them they are wrong. Instead, compare your two views.

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., Switzler, A. (2012). *Crucial conversations* (2nd Ed). New York: McGraw Hill.

Benefits of Interns Professional Growth: "One of the best ways to learn is through teaching and mentoring others" (Commission on Dietetic Registration [CDR], 2016). This is because interns often challenge our thoughts with questions.

New Perspectives: "Students often come from different backgrounds have different experiences, or have different perspective than we do, and they can help us see our jobs and responsibilities in a whole new way" (CDR, 2016).

A Resource: "Students require time; however, they also can help you to accomplish your work through their research and projects" (CDR, 2016).

Fair Labor Standards Act

Remember that an intern must always be supervised. If you need to come late or leave early, please be sure to appoint a contact person at your facility that the intern can go to with questions. Preceptors should also be sure to follow up on any work that an intern completes at home to check for questions and check the intern's comprehension.

Note the following from the U.S. Department of Labor:

- The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
- The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
- The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
- The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may be impeded;
- The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the end of the internship;
- The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm>

***We realize that there will be situations in which a preceptor may need an intern to help with a project that is more beneficial for the facility than for the intern's learning experience. As long as these situations are occasional and something that a dietitian might also have to do, it is allowed. For example, there might be an "all hands-on deck" situation when an oven breaks down in the kitchen and all available employees need to make sandwiches. This does not contribute directly to an intern's learning experience, but it is a real-life situation that a dietitian may encounter.**

Preceptors Before your intern starts:

1. Check the schedule to look ahead and see if you are expecting an intern
2. Interns will email you 2-3 weeks before they start – if you will be on vacation for that week, be sure to connect with them, so that the intern knows where/when to meet you.
3. Respond to the intern by Friday of that week with time/place, etc., so they know what to do on Tuesday morning

While your intern is with you:

1. Even if the intern is responsible for seeing and charting on some of the patients, the preceptor should still review those charts as if they are going to see the patients for themselves. This ensures the intern did not miss anything in the assessment (the note can be correct and ready for co-signing, but that does not always mean that the intern captured the accurate information with the patient).
2. For telemetry, cardiac care, neurology, medical and surgical rotations, encourage the intern to complete the entire Nutrition Care Process on 2-3 patients per day by the end of the first week and at least half of the patients per day by the end of the second week for two-week rotations. During Staff Relief Preparation Week, interns should be able to complete almost the entire workload independently under the preceptor's supervision by the end of the week.
3. For telemetry and cardiac care rotations, please ensure that the intern is competent in basic diet education by the end of the rotation. This may require role-playing if there are not enough appropriate patients during the rotation.
4. For medical, oncology and neurology rotations, please ensure that the intern is competent in basic nutrition support by the end of the rotation. This may require the preceptor to create hypothetical situations for practice if there are not enough actual nutrition support patients during the rotation.
5. If you are coming late or leaving early, make sure to appoint another inpatient RD to be a contact for the intern if they need assistance.

Tips for Staff Relief:

1. Assure space for yourself and for your intern(s). Confirm you are both aware of the intern contact phone number and the dietitian contact pager or phone number.
2. On day one, assess your intern(s). Ask what they are comfortable doing.
 - Beginner: Intern is still unsure of role. RD plans the day and gives intern referrals as they are capable.
 - Lots of assistance: intern is comfortable preparing for the day but would like direction on each patient

- Some assistance: intern is comfortable preparing for the day, would like assistance with EN and PN and other pts PRN.
- Minimal assistance: intern is comfortable preparing for the day, would like to talk through EN and PN prior to charting.
- No assistance: Intern is comfortable doing the work alone, but RD should be available for questions.

3. Even for the intern that request no assistance, make sure to look through the charts of the patients they are seeing as if you were to chart on them yourself to ensure you are aware of what the intern should be addressing.
4. Remind intern about time management. Cosign periodically throughout the day – make sure to also double-check their orders, discharge recommendations, education tab, problem list entry, etc. as needed.
5. Ask for updates and inquire if help is needed minimally TID. Help with time management and see a few patients if needed.
6. Provide feedback to the intern – constructive criticism and encouragement/compliments as needed so that they can improve each day. They may require “pushing” to finish the work in a timely manner.
7. As time allows, dietitians can assist other RDs, help other interns, update diet education material, etc.
8. At the end of the day, assure that all notes are cosigned. Plan for the following day.

ACEND Core 2022 Competency Standards

1. Domain 1. Scientific and Evidence Base of Practice: Integration of scientific information and translation of research into practice.

Competencies

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- CRDN 1.1 Select indicators of program quality and/or customer service and measure achievement of objectives.
 - CRDN 1.2 Evaluate research and apply evidence-based guidelines, systematic reviews and scientific literature in nutrition and dietetics practice.
 - CRDN 1.3 Justify programs, products, services and care using appropriate evidence or data.
 - CRDN 1.4 Conduct projects using appropriate research or quality improvement methods, ethical procedures and data analysis utilizing current and/or new technologies.
 - CRDN 1.5 Incorporate critical-thinking skills in overall practice.
2. Domain 2. Professional Practice Expectations: Beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors for the nutrition and dietetics practitioner level of practice.

Competencies

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- CRDN 2.1 Practice in compliance with current federal regulations and state statutes and rules, as applicable, and in accordance with accreditation standards and the Scope of Practice for the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Standards of Practice, Standards of Professional Performance, and Code of Ethics for the Profession of Nutrition and Dietetics.
- CRDN 2.2 Demonstrate professional writing skills in preparing professional communications.
- CRDN 2.3 Demonstrate active participation, teamwork and contributions in group settings.
- CRDN 2.4 Function as a member of interprofessional teams.
- CRDN 2.5 Work collaboratively with NDTRs and/or support personnel in other disciplines.
- CRDN 2.6 Refer clients and patients to other professionals and services when needs are beyond individual scope of practice.
- CRDN 2.7 Apply change management strategies to achieve desired outcomes.
- CRDN 2.8 Demonstrate negotiation skills.
- CRDN 2.9 Actively contribute to nutrition and dietetics professional and community organizations.
- CRDN 2.10 Demonstrate professional attributes in all areas of practice.

- CRDN 2.11 Show cultural humility in interactions with colleagues, staff, clients, patients and the public.
 - CRDN 2.12 Implement culturally sensitive strategies to address cultural biases and differences.
 - CRDN 2.13 Advocate for local, state or national legislative and regulatory issues or policies impacting the nutrition and dietetics profession.
3. Domain 3. Clinical and Client Services: Development and delivery of information, products and services to individuals, groups and populations.

Competencies

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- CRDN 3.1 Perform Medical Nutrition Therapy by utilizing the Nutrition Care Process including use of standardized nutrition terminology as a part of the clinical workflow elements for individuals, groups and populations of differing ages and health status, in a variety of settings.
 - CRDN 3.2 Conduct nutrition focused physical exams.
 - CRDN 3.3 Perform routine health screening assessments including measuring blood pressure, conducting waived point-of-care laboratory testing (such as blood glucose or cholesterol), recommending and/or initiating nutrition-related pharmacotherapy plans (such as modifications to bowel regimens, carbohydrate to insulin ratio, B12 or iron supplementation)
 - CRDN 3.4 Provide instruction to clients/patients for self-monitoring blood glucose, considering diabetes medication and medical nutrition therapy plan.
 - CRDN 3.5 Explain the steps involved and observe the placement of nasogastric or nasoenteric feeding tubes; if available, assist in the process of placing nasogastric or nasoenteric feeding tubes.
 - CRDN 3.6 Conduct a swallow screen and refer to the appropriate health care professional for full swallow evaluation when needed.
 - CRDN 3.7 Demonstrate effective communication and documentation skills for clinical and client services in a variety of formats and settings, which include telehealth and other information technologies and digital media.
 - CRDN 3.8 Design, implement and evaluate presentations to a target audience.
 - CRDN 3.9 Develop nutrition education materials that are culturally and age appropriate and designed for the literacy level of the audience.
 - CRDN 3.10 Use effective education and counseling skills to facilitate behavior change.
 - CRDN 3.11 Develop and deliver products, programs or services that promote consumer health, wellness and lifestyle management.
 - CRDN 3.12 Deliver respectful, science-based answers to client/patient questions concerning emerging trends.
 - CRDN 3.13 Coordinate procurement, production, distribution and service of goods and services, demonstrating and promoting responsible use of resources.
 - CRDN 3.14 Develop and evaluate recipes, formulas and menus for acceptability and affordability that accommodate the cultural diversity and health needs of various populations, groups and individuals.
4. Domain 4. Practice Management and Use of Resources: Strategic application of principles of management and systems in the provision of services to individuals and organizations.

Competencies

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- CRDN 4.1 Participate in management functions of human resources (such as hiring, training and scheduling).
- CRDN 4.2 Perform management functions related to safety, security and sanitation that affect employees, clients, patients, facilities and food.
- CRDN 4.3 Conduct clinical and client service quality management activities (such as quality improvement or quality assurance projects).
- CRDN 4.4 Apply current information technologies to develop, manage and disseminate nutrition information and data.
- CRDN 4.5 Analyze quality, financial and productivity data for use in planning.
- CRDN 4.6 Propose and use procedures as appropriate to the practice setting to promote sustainability, reduce waste and protect the environment.
- CRDN 4.7 Conduct feasibility studies for products, programs or services with consideration of costs and benefits.
- CRDN 4.8 Develop a plan to provide or develop a product, program or service that includes a budget, staffing needs, equipment and supplies.
- CRDN 4.9 Engage in the process for coding and billing for nutrition and dietetics services to obtain reimbursement from public or private payers, fee-for-service and value-based payment systems.
- CRDN 4.10 Analyze risk in nutrition and dietetics practice (such as risks to achieving set goals and objectives, risk management plan, or risk due to clinical liability or foodborne illness).

5. Domain 5. Leadership and Career Management: Skills, strengths, knowledge and experience relevant to leadership potential and professional growth for the nutrition and dietetics practitioner.

Competencies

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- CRDN 5.1 Perform self-assessment that includes awareness in terms of learning and leadership styles and cultural orientation and develop goals for self-improvement.
- CRDN 5.2 Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals.
- CRDN 5.3 Prepare a plan for professional development according to Commission on Dietetic Registration guidelines.
- CRDN 5.4 Advocate for opportunities in the professional settings (such as asking for additional responsibility, practicing negotiating a salary or wage or asking for a promotion).
- CRDN 5.5 Demonstrate the ability to resolve conflict.
- CRDN 5.6 Promote team involvement and recognize the skills of each member.
- CRDN 5.7 Mentor others.
- CRDN 5.8 Identify and articulate the value of precepting.

Diet To Lifestyle Dietetic Internship
Preceptor Qualifications (Standard 5)

Preceptor name (last, first, initial):

Preceptor employer:

Employer address:

Preceptor daytime phone:

Preceptor email:

Years preceptor has worked for this employer:

How many hours per week does this preceptor work for this employer?

Has this preceptor previously supervised students/interns?

Yes No

Preceptor's highest degree achieved:

Preceptor's professional credentials:

What licensure or professional certification is required for your role as a practitioner?

Check the rotations for this preceptor and facility:

Clinical Rotation Foodservice Rotation Community Rotation
Other: _____ Other: _____

Other Information:

Diet To Lifestyle Dietetic Internship Preceptor/Rotation Evaluation

* Please fill this in for every rotation/preceptor and submit *electronically* via Student Software to the Program Director. *

Rotation Site:	Intern:
Preceptor (s):	Date:

Please enter the number rating that closely corresponds with performance according to the given situations. Please feel free to make written comments.

3 - Strongly agree 2 - Agree 1 – Disagree N/A – Not applicable

1. The length of the rotation was adequate.	
2. You were given adequate orientation to the facility to function effectively.	
3. Sufficient opportunities were given to practice skills.	
4. Objectives of the rotation were clearly stated.	
5. You received exposure to all nutrition services offered.	
6. Preceptor was organized and a good manager of his/her time.	
7. The activities were well organized.	
8. Instructions and expectations were communicated clearly.	
9. You understood your daily schedule, due dates, etc.	
10. The staff had a clear understanding of your competencies, objectives and skills.	
11. Adequate feedback was given about your performance or explanations provided when requested.	
12. Your evaluation was performed fairly.	
13. Your experiences were adequately supervised.	
14. Opportunities were provided to ask questions and receive assistance.	
15. Questions were answered clearly and to your understanding.	
16. The experience provided the opportunity to improve professionally.	
17. If your performance was substandard, were you given comments that helped you improve?	
18. The experience provided opportunities to exhibit creativity and resourcefulness.	
19. The resources provided were adequate for your experience and assignments.	
20. The preceptor was approachable and listened to your concerns.	
If you answered any as “disagree” please explain.	
What activities/experiences were most valuable to your professional growth?	
What activities/experiences were of least value to your professional growth?	

What suggestions would you offer to make this experience more valuable?
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Preceptor's Checklist for Intern Orientation to Facility

The following are some important topics to include in the orientation process for interns at your site:

- How students will obtain an appropriate ID (if needed)
 - What, if any, office, locker, or other space the student may use
 - Parking restrictions
 - How the student will access phones, pages, computers/library, etc.
 - Required facility orientation (dress code, HIPAA, etc.)
 - Meals policy
 - Mission & goals of the facility
 - Facility policies & code of conduct
 - Other staff / introductions
 - Food Service Professional, Administrator, or Dietitian job description at site
 - Typical routine and schedule (i.e. work hours, breaks, special events, rounds)
 - Resources (i.e. manuals, education materials, etc.)
 - Tools – items the intern should bring to rotations (i.e. calculator, lab coat, binder containing essential documents)
 - Intern's learning style, comfort, and experience with facility
 - Preceptor's work / communication style
 - Planning and goal setting (including when this will occur)
 - Required documentation the preceptor must submit regarding a student's progress and evaluations (and schedule)
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Faculty and Staff Contact Information

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