

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the University of Memphis Dietetic Internship & Residency Program Preceptor Training. Preceptors are critical to a dietetic internship and provide the supervised practice link that allows the intern to make the transition from student to practitioner. In a recent JADA article (Robinson, 2002) it was estimated that more than 18,000 supervised practice placements were needed in the U. S. annually. Further, reporting on a survey of preceptors, that same article found that most preceptors felt poorly prepared for their role as a clinical preceptor. We hope that this training will help you to feel more prepared for the preceptor role.

The American Dietetic Association has declared a three-pronged approach to training dietetic professionals:

- Didactic knowledge
- Supervised practice
- Examination

Thus, ADA views supervised practice as critically important to the training of future dietetic professionals. Supervised practice provides the practice and practical experience to interns with didactic knowledge and that turns them into entry-level RDs. If you will remember your internship, your supervised practice experiences were probably the most exciting, rewarding, and important part of the internship. But, sometimes they were not good experiences – and might have even made you doubt your choice of careers. In short, the effectiveness of the supervised practice experience depends on the effectiveness of the preceptor. However, learning to be a preceptor is not something that was covered – in classes or in supervised practice. While some people intuitively know how to precept, most of us do not. Luckily, the fairly extensive literature on precepting in allied health areas tells us that the skills of a good preceptor can be learned.

We have several objectives for this training, the most important being to help make the precepting experience more rewarding and manageable for you. We are working to get CEU credits for this training and will alert all of you when we have done that. As with many things, this turns out to be more complicated than you would expect. The following topics are covered in this training, each in a separate file:

- an overview of The U of M Internship Program
- the differences in teaching, precepting, and mentoring
- the benefits of being a preceptor
- the characteristics of an effective preceptor

- understanding the adult learner
- effective teaching strategies
- using feedback and evaluation
- self-evaluation of your precepting technique
- FAQs
- references used in preparing the training

It is our hope that this training will provide the tools to make the precepting experience better for you and for your future interns.

Preceptors who complete this training module will:

- understand the educational and employment background of interns assigned to them.
- be able to identify characteristics that former and current interns value in a preceptor.
- understand how the role of preceptor differs from that of mentor and teacher.
- understand the traits of an effective preceptor.
- understand the special consideration important in working with adult learners.
- learn two models for precepting interns.
- learn two different types of evaluation used with interns.
- understand how each type of evaluation is effectively used.
- have a tool to evaluate their precepting skills after each experience with an intern.
- understand the appropriate action to take when certain situations occur with interns.
- understand how to deal with problems with interns.