

# Best Practices for Virtual Rotations

## Guidelines for Preceptors

*Thank you for agreeing to host an intern virtually! While we recognize that this is often not the ideal/preferred manner of teaching or learning we have found that, with good planning and minor adjustments, a virtual rotation can still be an enriching experience. We are providing this list of suggestions as a guide to make the experience a good one for both you and the intern. This is certainly not an exhaustive list and some items may need to be adjusted depending on the nature of your work - but hopefully these ideas are helpful!*

### **Prior to Rotation / Orientation**

- Before the intern starts, sketch out a weekly schedule for the time they will be with you. Interns like to have clear expectations and specifics about when assignments will be turned in. Include any scheduled events such as appointments, trainings, and meetings and an initial list of projects you plan to have them complete. Share this on Day 1 and refine as needed.
- On the first day, plan to spend a good amount of time discussing what you do, how it has changed due to COVID, schedule and project ideas that you and the intern have, timelines, expectations, and any other questions or concerns.
- Schedule checkpoints to review progress on assignments and set deadlines for final submissions. Schedule a tentative day and time for the final evaluation meeting.
- Discuss communication preferences and exchange all needed contact information. Share any windows of time that you might not be available to respond right away.
- Provide introductory information for the intern to learn independently about your organization/facility and what you do/who you serve (training manuals, videos, articles, websites). Ask them to write down questions and answer them at the next check-in.
- If available, provide opportunities for the intern to learn about the role of other members of your team by setting up a video conference or virtual shadowing so the intern can spend some time with each of them.

### **Communication**

- Do a brief check-in (5 minutes) at both the start and end of the work day (preferably, via Zoom or other video conferencing application). This will allow you to touch base on projects/work completed and gauge what was accomplished throughout the day.
- Use a shared space such as Google drive or Dropbox to organize projects and other documents related to the rotation.
- Project management software is another option to keep yourself and the intern organized. This article provides suggestions for some with free versions: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/free-project-management-software>
- Consider use of written and visual aids (i.e., handouts) in conjunction with oral communication. This helps reinforce the information and appeals to different learning styles.
- Keep in mind that it can be difficult to predict how long it will take an intern to complete a project. Check in often to see where they are, and whether they are ready for additional work.
- Provide feedback in a timely manner. When possible, go over the feedback in a live session with the intern to allow them to ask questions for clarification.

### **Projects and Activities**

- Involve the intern in your daily work as much as possible. A conference call or training that you consider mundane can be very interesting to an intern and lets them gain an understanding of your typical day-to-day activities. Some ideas include:
  - If seeing patients/clients, allow the intern to “sit in” or participate virtually (as appropriate and with client permission, of course)

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- When it is not possible for the intern to sit in/participate in appointments, have them assist with preparation and then provide a simulation by role playing a similar client and letting the intern play the dietitian. Discuss and provide feedback.
- Use the screen share feature on Zoom (or other conferencing software) to show the intern what your charting and other systems look like if they are not able to access themselves.
- When coming up with projects, think about those items on your to-do list that you never quite get to or those long-term, big picture projects that you hope to “someday” get off the ground. These are great for interns to help with!
- Have a list of “extra” projects available that the intern can help with in case they finish their assigned work early. Consider keeping this list in a shared space that you can both access so the intern can refer to it at any time. Some specific project ideas include:
  - Researching new/emerging therapies or processes and summarizing or presenting the information to you/your team
  - Conducting feasibility studies for services you would like to enhance or add
  - Menu/recipe creation and nutrition analysis
  - Creating and scheduling your social media posts for the next several weeks, or months
  - Creating (or updating) educational materials, training materials, or presentations

***Please feel free to reach out if you have questions or need support during the rotation!***

## Guidelines for Interns

*The guidelines and suggestions for successful in-person rotations still apply to virtual format! Some people find working remotely to be a challenge, but it can be overcome with some extra effort and discipline on your part. It is important to remain in contact with your preceptor and keep them informed of your progress and your needs in relation to experiences and projects. Thanks to technology most experiences are possible to do virtually, so if you want to see or do something just ask!*

- Be as detailed as possible when writing your objectives for the rotation and what you want to accomplish. Come prepared with some specific ideas when you meet with your preceptor initially.
- Do your research on the site/organization and come prepared with a list of questions you would like to ask on your first day.
- Get dressed as if you are going in to work each day. Designate a workspace to sit in while working on rotation projects, meeting with your preceptor, etc. Make sure you have a professional background set up for video conferencing and be prepared for spontaneous video conferences that could occur throughout the day. See these additional [work from home tips](#)
- During your set rotation hours, work only on projects related to the rotation.
- Give yourself breaks. Take 5 minutes every hour to stretch/walk around. Schedule in a lunch break too!
- Be prepared for all check-ins/meetings with your preceptor. Keep a running list of items you want to be sure to cover, and questions you want to remember to ask.
- Communicate throughout the day as needed with your preceptor, respecting their preferred communication method and any windows of time they may be unavailable during the day.
- Log your hours daily including a list of all activities/items that you worked on and the approximate amount of time you spent on each one. Provide this list to your preceptor to keep them updated.
- If you run out of things to do, or expect that you will, be proactive in asking for more work.
- If you observe that a process could be done more efficiently or have ideas for updating programs or services, share them and offer your help! An intern’s “fresh set of eyes” can be very helpful in identifying areas for improvement.