

## **Program for Dietetic Interns (PDI) Prior Learning Assessment Policy and Procedure**

Policy: Prior learning assessment and the assignment of credit toward supervised practice hours is acceptable by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). Additionally, The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) no longer requires the dietetic internship be the sole custodian of the whole body of experiential learning to qualify for the registered dietitian examination. The AND now allows programs the flexibility to modify supervised practice experiences for individuals with extensive learning and professional competence acquired outside the academic setting.

The PDI has developed an effective process to assess and validate achievement of competencies (knowledge and skills) for which an intern receives credit for prior learning. The PDI prior learning assessment procedure provides limited credit in a way that recognizes the learning achievements of interns while conserving their resources of time and money in the pursuit of the supervised practice experience. Interns may apply for credit towards supervised practice hours gained from paid or volunteer experience of at least one (1) year post graduation from an accredited bachelor's degree program or after successful completion of an ACEND-accredited didactic program in dietetics.

### Purpose:

- A. Provide interns an opportunity to apply for credit for supervised practice hours gained prior to admission to the PDI toward their dietetic internship. Typically, the individual qualifying for this credit has significant, relevant work or life experiences.
- B. Apply for up to 4 weeks or 160 hours community nutrition credit and/or up to 4 weeks or 160 hours management/food service management credit of intern's prior learning towards the 1200 supervised practice hours required in ACEND dietetic internship programs.

### Definitions:

- A. Supervised practice hours: Dietetic internship hours supervised by either a registered dietitian or qualified supervisor, leading to the registered dietitian credential.
- B. ACEND: Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' accrediting agency for education programs preparing students for careers as registered dietitians or dietetic technicians, registered.

### Policy Standards:

- A. Interns are required to complete a minimum of 1200 supervised practice hours.
- B. Hours must meet the defined ACEND learning outcomes and competencies.
- C. Graduation date will not change regardless of prior learning credit awarded.

- D. No prior learning credit will be awarded towards the Clinical/Medical Nutrition Therapy supervised practice hours, general orientation, community/public health nutrition concentration and didactic classes.
- E. Coursework in dietetics (DPD-didactic program in dietetics) is excluded from prior learning consideration.
- F. All fees, if applicable, for the PDI will remain the same regardless of prior learning credit given.

Criteria:

To be considered, the intern must:

- A. Be accepted as a dietetic intern in the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS) Program for Dietetic Interns.
- B. Take the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) Registered Dietitian practice exam and score at least 80% in the domain for which credit is requested.
- C. Provide, using a portfolio, samples of projects, reports, presentations and professional practice that demonstrate advanced knowledge and skill in the area of dietetics for which assessment is requested (i.e., knowledge and skill equivalent for an entry-level dietetic practitioner as outlined by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics).
- D. Complete all the appropriate prior learning application forms available on the MDHSS PDI website or from the PDI Program Director at [Vicki.Strickland@health.mo.gov](mailto:Vicki.Strickland@health.mo.gov). The Academy's educational competencies for specific rotations in this program will be provided and the intern must adequately show/demonstrate advanced knowledge and skill, not just work history.
- E. Understand prior learning credit is granted only for learning, not for experience or college coursework. The intern must be able to demonstrate or prove that what is claimed to have been learned or achieved meets the competencies required for an entry-level dietetic practitioner.
- F. Submission of a request for prior learning credit does not guarantee that such credit will be awarded, in full or in part as requested.
- G. Submit the completed prior learning credit packet by May 15 to allow for adequate evaluation.

Procedure:

- A. Interns may apply for prior learning credit only after acceptance into the PDI.
- B. Intern will take the AND practice exam. Once the exam is completed, and a score of at least 80% is obtained, the intern will contact the PDI Program Director by phone or email to request an assessment of prior learning. Applications for prior assessed learning must

be submitted by May 15 of the year the internship is to start, so that the intern can be scheduled to reflect credit that was given.

- C. Intern must complete the attached documents and submit a hard copy of the portfolio. All documents must be typed or word processed and neatly bound. No hand written materials will be accepted.
- D. The attached PDI Prior Learning forms contain the 2012 ACEND Learning Objectives and Competencies for dietetic internship programs in table format. Only those competencies and associated rotations for which prior learning credit will be given are included.
- E. Interns applying for prior learning credit must complete the table(s) including activity, date, location and time (hours) spent at the sites achieving the competency and learning outcome(s). The documented learning must be clearly and directly related to the competency statements required by ACEND for completion of the dietetic internship program. Training can only be claimed if a test and demonstration of skill were required and completed in order to pass or if the training results in a certification.
- F. In addition to completing the PDI Prior Learning forms, the intern must include a 1 page narrative for each applicable learning objective detailing HOW the learning objective and competency was met. The narrative must include examples of activities. Multiple learning objectives may be addressed by one learning experience and combined into one narrative if practical.
- G. Interns will submit samples of projects, reports, presentations and practice that demonstrate advanced knowledge and skill in dietetics.
- H. Interns must submit documentation from the registered dietitian or other qualified person who supervised their prior learning hours. This documentation must include an evaluation from the supervisor, a statement of intern's activities, or other written documentation of activities. Documentation must include supervisor's contact information.
- I. The Internship Director, WIC Nutrition Services Manager and a preceptor will review submitted Prior Learning Portfolios for evaluation and approval of supervised practice hours to be credited. Final decisions will relate to assessment of individual intern's prior learning based on the portfolio provided and any verification of information provided as deemed appropriate.
- J. The intern will be notified no later than July 1 of any prior learning hours credited via the assessment.
- K. The amount of supervised practice hours to be credited will be dependent upon the number of rotation hours assigned to the rotation being requested. If determined that the intern will receive credit hours for prior experience, the internship will be shortened accordingly. Graduation date will remain the same as for other interns in the program.

**Credit:**

Interns may be excused from the internship for:

- Community nutrition – up to 4 weeks or a maximum of 160 hours
- Management – up to 4 weeks or a maximum of 160 hours

Partial credit for a specific rotation may be awarded based on the knowledge and skills for which credit is being given.

Total rotation time credited to prior learning cannot exceed 8 weeks or 320 hours.

**Portfolio:**

Experiences submitted for prior learning credit evaluation must be classified as Community Nutrition or Management.

Projects, reports, presentations and educational materials produced by the intern which demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills will be evaluated for prior learning credit. Job descriptions, performance evaluations, letters from clients, and so on, can be used as supporting documentation of knowledge and skills as applicable. These supporting materials shall be clearly labeled as to which experience(s) they are applicable. They must be neatly bound in a folder or portfolio cover or online portfolio folders.

Additional documentation/clarification of activities must be provided to the PDI Program Director upon request. Failure to do so in a timely manner may preclude obtaining prior learning credit.

The portfolio format for application for prior learning credit consists of:

- A. Cover Letter:** This letter is a short introduction to the evaluators outlining the area or areas that are covered in the portfolio. The intern should list personal information, such as telephone numbers, email address and regular mailing address in case the evaluators need to make further contact to verify or clarify information with regard to the portfolio date, and signature of intern.
- B. Table of Contents:** The table of contents should show the headings of the various subdivisions of the portfolio in order to assist the evaluators in reading the portfolio. Each item listed must have an accurate page number in the bottom center of the page. Be sure that the table of contents lists every item included in the portfolio.
- C. Resume:** This is a brief description of personal information, employment, military and educational background. The resume serves as an introduction to the assessor. The resume must be typed and the maximum length should be no more than two (2) pages.
- D. Narrative of How This Area of Prior Learning Relates to the ACEND Competencies:** The intern will want the narrative in this area to include: 1) The subject matter for which they are seeking credit and specify how many hours of credit. 2) The area of the dietetic internship rotations into which prior learning credit will fit. Projects

with a narrative describing each experience, what was done, what was learned as the result of the experience and how these apply to the ACEND learning objectives must be included. 3) Include the completed applicable PDI prior learning form. Supporting materials such as samples of projects, newsletters, and materials produced by the applicant that demonstrate the competencies described should be included and referenced in the narrative. Retain copies of any supporting materials as they will not be returned. The Director will keep all materials in the intern's PDI file for documentation purposes.

- E. **Documentation/Verification by Supervisor:** An evaluation must be completed by the supervisor. This can be an evaluation from the agency/employer or a letter from the supervisor describing the intern's performance will be adequate. Supervisor's name as well as contact information must be provided.
  
- F. **Recommendation from a Registered Dietitian:** This is required only if the supervisor is not a registered dietitian. This individual must be familiar enough with the intern's work experience to speak to whether the experience is equivalent to that required of an entry-level dietitian.

While the PDI Director can provide guidance and assistance, it is the sole responsibility of the intern to provide a portfolio of documentation that will serve as the basis for determination of credit towards supervised practice hours.

To submit:

Complete the prior learning application materials and submit them to the PDI Program Director. These forms will be available to interns through the MDHSS PDI website <http://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/dieteticintern/index.php> or by calling the Dietetic Internship Program Director Vicki Strickland MA, RD, LD at (573) 526-7961 or emailing her at [Vicki.Strickland@health.mo.gov](mailto:Vicki.Strickland@health.mo.gov).

Send all materials to the MDHSS PDI Program Director at Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, WIC and Nutrition Services, 930 Wildwood Drive, PO Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570.

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