

How to identify prospective preceptors and rotation sites

Start with who you already know. As a DPD student, you began your professional networking with classmates, faculty, supervisors for fieldwork, practicum, or volunteer work, employers and others. Attending local nutrition and dietetics activities may have further expanded your network. So, the first people you should ask about prospective preceptors and rotation sites are your friends and acquaintances, especially if any are RDs. People you may know in related health professions, such as nurses or speech pathologists, may work with RDs in clinical practice who can help you to secure a rotation site.

Look around your neighborhood. What are the organizations and institutions that serve your area? Schools, Head Start, WIC, Cooperative Extension, Department of Health, faith-based or civic organizations, food pantries, soup kitchens, or community gardens, all may provide opportunities for practice experiences in food and nutrition education, food service management, or other areas. Your local community college or health-related charity may be a good place to explore community-based research.

Cast a wider net. When looking for additional opportunities, or an experience in a very specific specialty, an internet search may be the way to go. Search for potential opportunities and contact the organization(s) you find. Even if they are too far away, or are unable to serve as your preceptor(s), they may know of a better option for you.

Have an attitude of service to the sites. When seeking locations and preceptors for your dietetic internship supervised practice, make it a two-way street. Think of how what you will do can be of benefit to the preceptor, her/his organization, and their patients/clients. In addition to what they will do for you in providing you with an opportunity for supervised practice, what will you be doing for them? Think this through before you call or visit the site. Being prepared to be of benefit can be the key to winning over a preceptor. Some examples of potentially beneficial abilities include fluency in a second language, computer skills, or skills acquired in a previous career or hobby. Be creative in arriving at a mutually beneficial plan.