

OUHSC ISPP

How do I find a preceptor?

Reach out to dietitians you know. Your DPD director, MNT or community nutrition professor may be able to share some names with you. Be independent and willing to cold-call, if necessary.

CLINICAL AND MANAGEMENT/FOODSERVICE SYSTEMS

Start with a facility near where you live or within commuting distance that has one or more full-time dietitians. Smaller regional hospitals are less likely to be saturated with dietetic interns than are larger metropolitan hospitals. Search Wikipedia. It has a list of hospitals in every state.

Call the clinical nutrition manager, or the dietitian if there is only one, and ask for an appointment. Tell the dietitian that you are or soon will be a dietetics graduate and that you are preparing to do your internship, so you are interviewing dietitians.

Go into the appointment dressed professionally and be prepared. Take an updated resume with you to the meeting.

Ask your interviewer how he or she became a dietitian and where they did their supervised practice hours.

Take a copy of the LOA form. What kind of foodservice do they have? Tell the dietitian OUHSC has already developed a curriculum that has assignments designed to benefit ISPP participant and the facility. These will be individualized based on the Assessment of Prior Learning for each ISPP Participant and may include doing sanitation surveys, conducting in-service training, developing menus and recipes, and conducting a research activity aimed at increasing productivity or some other project of interest to the facility.

Ask about clinical dietetics. How many dietitians are there? Do they do surgery at the facility? Is there a critical care unit? If not, where do they usually transfer critically ill patients? OUHSC has a clinical curriculum and will be individualized for the ISPP Participant and may include doing nutrition care worksheets for patients with various diagnoses including diabetes, heart failure, strokes, kidney and GI diseases. ISPP Participants are also required to complete an in-depth case study and give an oral presentation as part of the supervised practice experience for clinical.

Do they see outpatients? Do the dietitians teach classes or participate in any community-outreach activities for which having an ISPP Participant might be helpful? The OUHSC curriculum includes developing a lesson plan and education material as well as making handouts.

If you have a compelling reason for doing supervised practice in their area, share it.

Convince the dietitian that you are a hard-working, self-starter and that you need to find a facility where you can volunteer to do your supervised practice hours in order to become eligible to take the RD exam.

Explain which parts of your supervised practice you would like to do at the facility.

Be confident and ask for what you need! If he or she is not the final decision maker, find out if there is someone else you should talk to or make a plan to get back in touch soon to find out the next steps.

COMMUNITY

School districts often have a dietitian or food service manager who supervises the school breakfast and lunch program. This person might be a preceptor for you, especially if you do some or all of your foodservice rotation in the schools. Again, Wikipedia has lists of school districts in each state. Do not forget private schools – sometimes they are very open to working with students and volunteers.

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A dietitian at the local health department who works with the WIC program is an ideal community preceptor. Use your Internet skills to find programs in your area. These are likely to include the state, city and county health departments as well as contractors who provide WIC services. Another idea for finding a primary preceptor is to call a **local consulting dietitian firm**. Keith and Associates is a large nutrition consulting firm headquartered in Oklahoma. There will be one in your state, too. These dietitians work at all kinds of facilities including hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, Head Starts, senior nutrition, assisted living centers and wellness/work sites. They may be able to put together an entire program for you.

There is a preceptor database sponsored by ACEND. You can look there to see if any preceptors in the geographic area you want have registered. The link is <https://www.eatrightpro.org/find-a-preceptor/>

Be sure to ask the preceptor if they are going to charge a fee. Most will not, but some do. OUHSC has already developed a curriculum with assignments designed to benefit both you and the facility. While you can expect to be assigned to work all hours, shifts and positions, you are an ISPP Participant and ACEND, the national accrediting body for nutrition and dietetics, does not allow interns, students or Participants to be used to replace employees.

You are responsible to find your own preceptors, however, the ISPP director is available to coach you if needed. The OUHSC Department of Nutritional Sciences must secure Letter of Agreements with all facilities before you do rotations there.