

Manitoba Partnership Dietetic Education Program

# The Preceptor's Guide



Winnipeg Regional Health Authority  
*Caring for Health*

Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg  
*À l'écoute de notre santé*

**Nutrition and Food Services**    **Services de diététique et d'alimentation**

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>page</b>
Introduction.....	3
Definitions of Key Terminology.....	5
Preceptoring	
• Who Benefits? .....	6
• Characteristics of an Effective Preceptor .....	7
• First Day Essentials.....	9
Enhancing the Learning Process	
• Self-Directed Learning.....	11
• Recognizing Different Learning Styles.....	12
• Teaching a Skill - a Three-stage Continuum.....	12
• Time-saving Tips for the Preceptor.....	13
• Developing Critical Thinking Skills through Questioning Techniques.....	14
The Art of Effective Evaluation	
• The Novice Expert Continuum & the Benner Scale.....	15
• When to Evaluate.....	17
• How to Evaluate.....	18
• Providing Constructive Feedback -An Example.....	19
• Final Evaluation: Sample Comments to Show Improvement is Needed.....	23
References.....	24
Appendix	

## Introduction



We warmly welcome you as a valued preceptor to the Manitoba Partnership Dietetic Education Program (MPP). As a preceptor, you will bridge the gap between theory and practice, facilitating the transformation of the intern from student to entry-level practitioner. Under your supervision, the intern will develop critical thinking skills to synthesize and apply nutrition, food service, communication and management principles, theory and skills. Your active participation in the intern's learning experience will play a key role in the shaping of the future of our dietetics profession. The following information is intended to make your preceptor experience a beneficial one for you, your organization and the intern.

### A Brief Overview

The MPP is a comprehensive graduate dietetic internship program that provides interns with the opportunity to demonstrate competence in all areas of dietetic practice (clinical nutrition, community nutrition, and food service management), as required by Dietitians of Canada. All interns participating in the MPP will complete part of their training outside Winnipeg. This will allow them to benefit from the knowledge and skills of a large group of experienced preceptors, to gain experience in a wider range of work settings, and to provide service to a greater diversity of client groups.

The MPP has been designed to prepare interns to work in both currently existing and emerging areas of dietetic practice. Reviews of graduate employment conducted by Dietitians of Canada indicate that employment opportunities are increasing in long-term care and in community practice (including First Nations communities). These areas of practice are being given increased emphasis in the MPP.

The MPP has been designed to provide interns with experience in a variety of health care settings, reflecting the full continuum of care. By taking advantage of learning opportunities throughout the province, interns will

have an opportunity to work in health promotion, primary health, acute care, tertiary care, and long-term care.

The MPP has been designed to accommodate self-directed adult learners with varying amounts of dietetics-related employment and volunteer experience. All interns will have the opportunity to document their prior learning, and to receive credit for this. Interns will be encouraged to use their credit to develop their skills beyond entry-level competence, or to gain more experience in a chosen area of dietetic practice. Within each section of the internship program, interns will be able to select placements related to their career goals.

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Jade Nayler

## Definitions of Key Terminology

*Adult Learner:* a learner, who is self-directed, internally motivated and seeks to learn what is considered important and relevant to a situation,

*Competency (skill):* statements defining what every entry-level dietitian should be able to do at the beginning of his or her career. Entry-level competence in all practice areas is not expected until the completion of the internship program.

*Competency-based Education:* internship is designed to focus on the needs and achievements of the learner (intern) rather than the activities of the teacher (preceptor).

*Intern's Learning Record:* a communication tool between preceptors regarding an intern's progress in major skill areas.

*Novice-Expert Continuum:* The Model of Lifelong Learning states that "in the acquisition and development of a skill, a student passes through five levels of proficiency: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert" (Wilson, 2001). The intern begins internship as a novice and achieves at the minimum, the competent level, as an entry-level practitioner.

*Benner Scale:* defines the characteristics of novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert

*Preceptor:* a qualified professional who supervises and facilitates a dietetic intern's learning experiences during an internship.

*Self-directed Learning:* a process in which the learner takes the initiative to establish their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, choose and implement appropriate learning strategies and evaluate the learning outcome.



## Preceptoring

### Who Benefits?

#### Benefits for the Preceptor

- ❖ Enhances opportunities to stay current as interns bring new ideas
- ❖ Increases professional networks e.g. MPP
- ❖ Increases challenge for personal learning
- ❖ Enhances creativity and energy
- ❖ Provides personal satisfaction and fulfillment

#### Benefits for the Dietetic Intern

- ❖ Enhances transition from student to practicing professional
- ❖ Develops critical thinking skills
- ❖ Illustrates application of theory to practice
- ❖ Exposes intern to future career options
- ❖ Reveals tools/strategies used by dietitians for accomplishing tasks
- ❖ Demonstrates the value of team approach
- ❖ Exposes intern to professional role model

#### Benefits for the Organization

- ❖ Demonstrates organizational commitment to education of future health care professionals
- ❖ Enhances recruitment opportunities
- ❖ Increases employee satisfaction

#### Benefits for the Profession

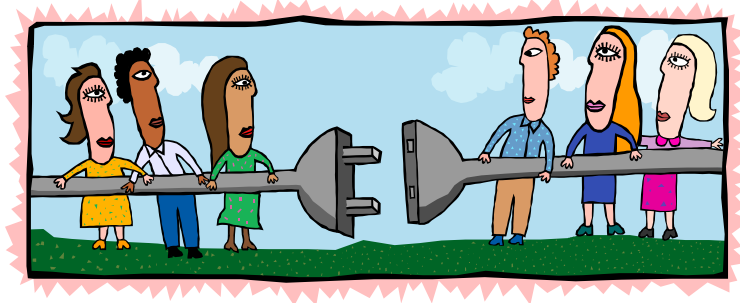
- ❖ Ensures the future of dietetics
- ❖ Invigorates the profession with fresh perspective



## Characteristics of an Effective Preceptor

### 1. Exemplary Interpersonal Skills

- ❖ Tell the intern that they are welcome and that they have your support. Ensure that body language, as well as words, express a positive and welcoming attitude.
- ❖ Take the intern to coffee and other "social" events.
- ❖ Provide a safe environment and be an advocate for the intern.
- ❖ Share a little about yourself. Find out about the intern's life experience and skills developed.
- ❖ Use the person's name, not "the intern" or "my intern".
- ❖ Show respect and confidence in interns.
- ❖ Demonstrate effective communication with members of the health care team and colleagues.



### 2. Enthusiasm about sharing knowledge and skills

- ❖ Demonstrate a positive attitude toward the preceptor role.
- ❖ Commit time for planned and impromptu consultation and feedback sessions.
- ❖ Be accessible and approachable.
- ❖ Explore different learning styles and accommodate where possible.
- ❖ Acknowledge that it is all right not to know the answer sometimes and admit when you don't know.

### 3. Positive professional identity

- ❖ Show enthusiasm about the dietetic profession, work setting, patients/clients/employees and area of specialty.
- ❖ Demonstrate that you are a lifelong learner.
- ❖ Be willing to learn from the learners and tell them so - two way learning.
- ❖ Demonstrate high professional standards and ethical behaviour.

#### 4. Willing Resource Person

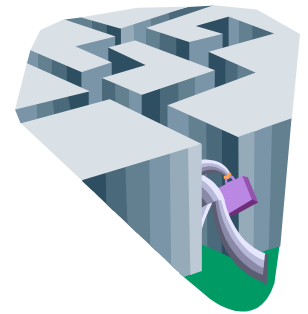


- ❖ State clearly the rationale for your actions and decisions to help the intern develop critical thinking skills and perform as a professional.
- ❖ Explain difficult problems or concepts in an understandable way and encourage the intern to ask questions.
- ❖ Expect interns to be independent learners who seek their own information and identify appropriate solutions. However, preceptors need to be available and willing to provide guidance when the intern needs help. Use the phrase, "Look it up!" judiciously and sparingly.
- ❖ Model technical and organization skills. Explain the daily routine and demonstrate how to redirect workload to tasks of higher priority. Show how shortcuts may be used to condense procedural tasks.
- ❖ Demonstrate effective and concise oral and written communication skills.



## First Day Essentials

Create an environment for success on the intern's first day. First impression is critical to "starting off on the right foot" so here are the necessary areas to discuss with your intern:



### 1. Provide **orientation** to:

- ❖ Physical space - tour of institution, location of washroom, parking, use of phone, workspace for intern, etc.
- ❖ Other staff
- ❖ Dietitian's role (job description)
- ❖ Type of client/patient
- ❖ Resources - teaching materials (active vs. inactive), audiovisual equipment, diet manual, computer, etc.
- ❖ Policies & procedures - mission and organization of the institution, description of programs, dress code, protocols, confidentiality, emergency procedures
- ❖ Baseline knowledge and tools needed e.g. formulae, calculator, background readings for assignments, etc.

### 2. Provide scheduling details for:

- ❖ Hours of work
- ❖ Daily routine
- ❖ Lunch and coffee breaks
- ❖ Rounds
- ❖ Meetings
- ❖ Project timelines
- ❖ Availability of dietitian
- ❖ One-on-one time
- ❖ Personal and written evaluations, etc.

### 3. Determine where the intern is "at" academically, professionally and personally. Review the **intern's learning record** and use the following questions to launch the discussion.

- ❖ What style of learning suits you best?
- ❖ What is your experience with...(nutrition assessment, patient counseling, cafeteria specials, budgeting, health promotion event, etc)?

- ❖ What courses have prepared you for this placement?
- ❖ What skills do you have that would be useful for this placement?

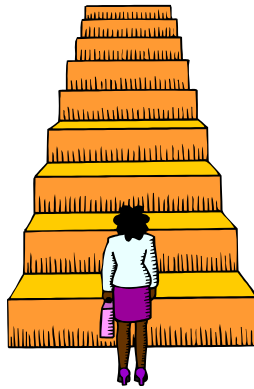
Find out where the intern is at with a particular skill. It is just as detrimental to underestimate the Learning Stage of your intern as it is to overestimate her or his abilities. For example if the intern's learning record has identified previous experience in taking a diet history, a preceptor need not begin with the intern observing a diet history being taken.

4. Clarify **goals and objectives** of the placement by reviewing the learning materials provided. In addition, discuss the following topics:
  - ❖ What do you hope to personally accomplish during this placement? Can you be more specific?
  - ❖ How do you see yourself achieving that?
  - ❖ Are there specific skills you need/want to develop/practice?
  - ❖ Discuss the tasks and **projects** to be assigned. Clarify expectations, and outline minor and major tasks/responsibilities.
5. Discuss feedback and evaluation (intern and preceptor) process.
  - ❖ Role of dietitian in the learning experience e.g. teaching methods used
  - ❖ Discuss when intern will be observed in action
  - ❖ Review evaluation forms (intern's performance appraisal form & placement evaluation). Discuss when feedback and evaluation will occur (set up appointments for midway and final evaluations; clarify who will give evaluation)

# Enhancing the Learning Process

## Promoting Self-directed Learning

Self-directed learning is a process in which the learner takes the initiative to establish their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, choose and implement appropriate learning strategies and evaluate the learning outcome.



The **role of a learner** in a self-directed learning environment is one who assumes responsibilities for his/her own learning plans and actions. This involves self-assessment prior to each placement of strengths and weaknesses and a development of subsequent strategies to attain improvement in weak areas. Dietetic interns should also complete a self-evaluation of their performance at the end of each placement to effectively monitor progress and understanding.

## How to Enhance Self-directed Learning



- ❖ Progressively decrease intern's dependency on preceptor
- ❖ Help intern to understand how to use learning resources i.e. identify what resources you use: journals, websites, texts, etc.

- ❖ Assist intern to assume increasing responsibility for identifying areas of needed improvement, planning how to address the issue and evaluating their progress
- ❖ Organize what is to be learned in relationship to the intern's level of understanding
- ❖ Foster intern decision making
- ❖ Facilitate problem-posing and problem-solving
- ❖ Give positive feedback to encourage the intern's efforts to change and to take risks

## Recognizing Different Learning Styles

People have different styles of learning. Some are **visual** learners (learn best from information in written form or by watching), some **auditory** learners (verbal explanation), and some are **practical** learners (learn by doing). Some learn best in **structured** setting, while others learn best in an **unstructured** setting.

## Teaching a Skill - a Three-stage Continuum

1. The **intern observes** the preceptor perform a specific task e.g. last minute product substitution during tray line, nutrition assessment, facilitate discussion on infant nutrition with teen moms.
2. The **preceptor observes** the intern perform the task, reinforces appropriate behaviour and offers suggestions for improvement. Repeat steps 1 & 2 as necessary until the intern and preceptor are comfortable with skill level.
3. Intern **performs task independently**. The preceptor evaluates intern performance by reviewing outcomes of the intern's actions e.g. review chart notes.

## Timesaving Tips for the Preceptor

Preceptors sometimes wonder how to fit teaching into an already hectic schedule. The following are timesaving suggestions on integrating teaching into your busy day:



1. Recognize and utilize teachable moments. Use a **"trigger"** such as a team member's comment, lab report, product evaluation or hot nutrition topic to initiate a short discussion. Allow the intern to respond with their interpretation of the information. This can occur on the spot.
2. If the intern has already seen similar situations or cases numerous times, it is not necessary to repeat the explanation in detail. Instead, **expand the case** by asking how the situation would be handled if for example, a work stoppage occurred or the patient was in renal failure.
3. **Deteriorate the case** by focusing the discussion on what would happen if the situation were not addressed e.g. repeated employee absenteeism or diet modification change from full to total minced.
4. **Delay gratification** by providing the framework whereby the intern would research the question for later discussion. This is not the same as telling the intern to, "Look it up".
5. **Involve other professionals** and allow them to explain their role as part of the team to give the intern a broader perspective e.g. diabetes education nurse, speech language pathologist, contract specialist (materials management).
6. Schedule **regular check-ins** to provide regular feedback, address concerns in a timely manner and monitor learning objectives.

## Questioning Techniques that Enhance Critical Thinking Skills

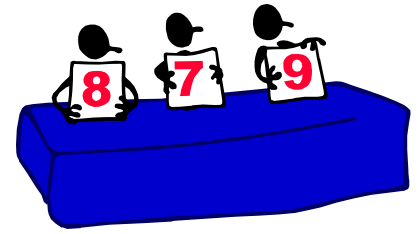
Effective questioning is an important technique to use to develop critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is the ability to synthesize pertinent information and apply the knowledge appropriately to a situation.



The following are some examples of how to question in various situations:

1. **Clarification** - when you require more information or meaning:
  - recall: what did we say earlier about....?
  - define: what do you mean by ....?
  - rephrase: can you put that another way?
  - illustrate: can you give me an example?
  - expand: can you go further with that?
  - label/identify: what is this called?
2. **Critical Awareness** - when you require evaluation of ideas, awareness of assumptions:
  - What are you assuming here?
  - How would someone of the opposing view respond?
  - Why do you think that is so?
  - What are you implying by that?
3. **Relation** - when you desire comparisons, linking, explaining of relationships.
  - At what point does the analogy break down?
  - Can you summarize the discussion?
  - How does this compare with...?
4. **Prediction** - when you require inference, supposition, theory-making.
  - If that were true, what would happen if...?
  - How would you handle this problem? What issues would you consider?
5. **Refocus** - when you want to shift the intern's attention towards the issue under discussion.
  - What does that mean in terms of...?

# The Art of Effective Evaluation



## Definition

Evaluation is based on the measurement of what the intern knows and does.

Evaluation compares the observed performance to the evaluation criteria for the placement, and the achievement of the DC Competencies for the Entry-level dietitian (see Appendix).

Evaluation is a method used to determine whether the process of education is effective.

## Purpose

- ❖ To identify and encourage appropriate performances. It helps focus learning.
- ❖ To identify and prevent mistakes from happening again.
- ❖ To reinforce what has been learned and motivate interns to continue to learn.
- ❖ To assess and promote interns' development of professional behaviours and attitudes.
- ❖ To promote partnership to enhance personal strengths.

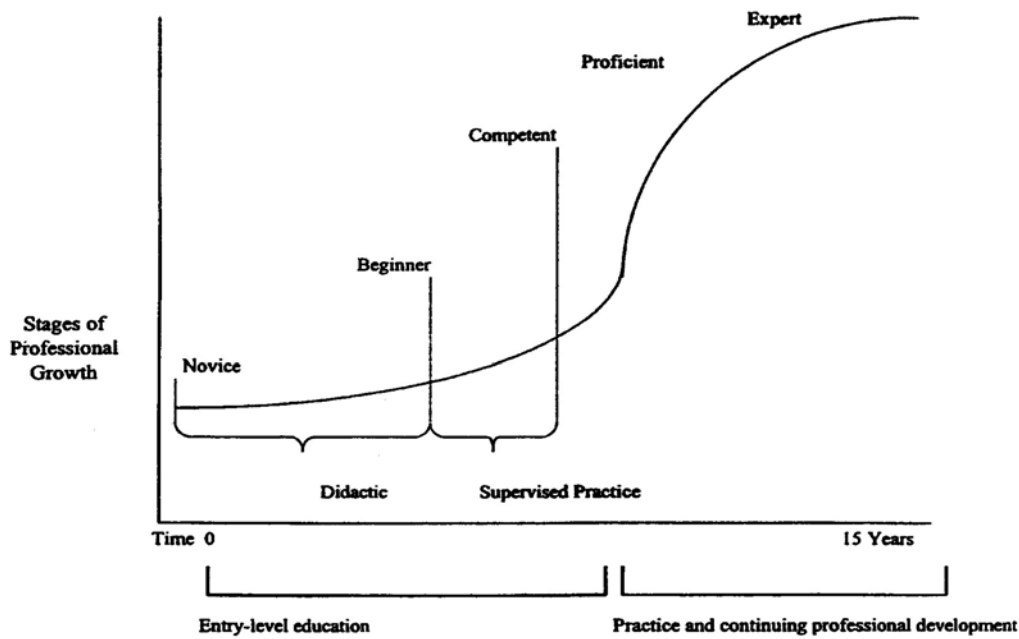
## The Novice-Expert Continuum & the Benner Scale

The Novice-Expert Continuum is based on a model of lifelong skill acquisition developed by Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus. The model identifies five levels in the development and acquisition of a skill during a lifetime of professional development: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert.

In dietetics education, the Dreyfus Model is known as the Model of Lifelong Learning (see figure 1). The model proposes that the intern begins internship as a novice and achieves at the minimum, the competent level, before graduating as an entry-level practitioner.

The rating scale used by the Manitoba Partnership Dietetic Education Program is an adaptation of the **Benner Scale** (see Appendix "MPP Performance Rating Categories for Dietetic Interns").

Figure 1: **Model of Lifelong Learning**



(Wilson, 2001)

Internship is a **competency-based or skill-based program**. Competency-based education focuses on the needs and achievements of the learner (intern) rather than the activities of the teacher (preceptor).

Every placement has defined competencies that the intern is expected to achieve. Preceptors will find clearly stated competencies pertinent to the placement to use as a guide in teaching and evaluating the intern. The minimum standard of performance that must be met by the conclusion of the internship is "competent" in all skills.

The MPP internship provides a variety of different settings for the intern. Thus preceptors must be able to distinguish competencies from logistical skills (procedures or knowledge specific to the facility e.g. diet nomenclature) when evaluating the intern.



Note that there is a difference between “competency” and “competent”.

**Competent** means...

An intern working at this level of skill can carry out the problem solving process (assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, communication), and does so independently when encountering familiar situations. However, the student recognizes her/his limitations and **seeks advice** from others in atypical, or more complex, situations.

## When to Evaluate

### Ongoing Feedback

- ❖ Helps intern define progress
- ❖ Helps integrate theory with practice

### Mid-point evaluation (verbal)

- ❖ Half-way through the placement
- ❖ Conducted to indicate to the interns how well s/he is meeting the objectives and whether there is the need for improvement

### Final evaluation

- ❖ The intern's stage of progress is evaluated at the end of the placement
- ❖ Activities may be planned near the completion of the placement specifically for evaluation purposes (e.g. complete a nutrition care plan, or conduct an audit)
- ❖ The evaluation is to be discussed with the intern
- ❖ The results of the final evaluation should not come as a surprise.



## How To Evaluate

### Evaluation should be:

#### **Regular and systematic**

- ❖ Performance is continuously assessed. Consistently give feedback throughout the placement to increase awareness and identify problems when there is still time to improve.

#### **Timely**

- ❖ Feedback should be provided as close to the event as possible, verbal can be followed by written if necessary.

#### **Specific**

- ❖ Feedback is provided to address specific behaviours and action. These must be within the intern's control (avoid evaluation of personality trait).

#### **Desired by learner**

- ❖ Feedback should be provided when the intern is ready and willing to accept it. If an intern is under a lot of stress or emotionally upset, do not give feedback at that time. Interns who feel threatened by the preceptor will not seek feedback nor be able to respond to any feedback that is given.

#### **Balanced**

- ❖ There should always be areas of strength and areas for improvement in the evaluations of all dietetic interns.

**Tip:** Consider keeping a log or journal of the intern's progress to help you in providing feedback and in the final evaluation.

## Providing Constructive Feedback - An Example

In order to elaborate on the keys to effective evaluation, the following steps are suggested and an example in clinical setting is selected to illustrate the techniques:

### Step 1: Give the feedback

- ❖ Let the intern know that you have a concern and wish to talk
- ❖ **If the evaluation is largely negative, it must be given privately, not in front of others!**
- ❖ Begin politely with a positive tone
- ❖ Identify the correct behaviours first then the incorrect ones
- ❖ Be specific
- ❖ Criticism should be based on first hand information to ensure accuracy and objectivity.

### Example:

*"I would like to talk to you about a concern I have. Could I talk to you for about 10 minutes?"* (go to a private room with the intern)

*"Before discussing my concern, I want to thank you for following through on the diet changes for Mr. Jones. I am glad to see your improvement in using the computer system. The concern I have noticed in the past few days is regarding your time management. I feel you have been spending too much time reviewing medical charts."*



### **Step 2: Obtain Intern's input**

- ❖ Ask how the intern feels and thinks about the criticism.
- ❖ Ask how the intern views the incorrect behaviour and whether she/he considers the issue a problem
- ❖ Try to understand what is the intention of the incorrect behaviour

#### **Example:**

*"I would like to know whether you think you have spent a long time on reviewing medical charts?"*

*"Yes. I just want to make sure I don't miss anything or misinterpret the information."*



### **Step 3: Respond to input**

- ❖ Let the intern know that you are listening and show understanding
- ❖ Tell the intern how you understand his/her point of view to reduce defensiveness
- ❖ Interns are more likely to listen to you and cooperate, if you demonstrate you are listening

#### **Example:**

*"You understand the importance of obtaining accurate information, and you may be spending more time on re-checking to confirm. However, it is necessary to efficiently obtain information from the medical chart so you can deliver quality patient care."*



**Step 4: Give the goal and the reason why**

- ❖ Give a summary of what has been discussed
- ❖ Re-state the goal and importance of the discussion
- ❖ Acknowledge the intern's input and understanding

**Example:**

*"We have discussed that you need to be more efficient when reviewing medical charts as it is essential in delivering good patient care. In order to provide nutrition care in a timely manner you should spend no longer than 20 minutes (depends on interns' stage) on reviewing patient's chart."*



**Step 5: Develop an action plan and follow up**

- ❖ Ask the intern to contribute a plan to resolve the situation
- ❖ Give your suggestion if their plan is inappropriate
- ❖ Develop concrete steps, dates and timelines to initiate the plan
- ❖ Give support and guidance to initiate the plan and follow up to ensure satisfaction
- ❖ If necessary, give a consequence if the plan is not followed

**Example:**

*"How do you think you can improve your time management skills in reviewing medical charts?"*

*"I think I can improve with more practice."*

*"That's true. However, I would like you to use the disease specific checklists from your Internship Manual to focus your review of medical charts. Let me know if you have any questions, and I will check with you tomorrow on your progress."*

## Final Evaluation: Sample Comments to Show Improvement Is Needed

**Tip:** Preface your suggestion(s) for improvement with a positive comment.

### Food Service Management

- ❖ Consider union contract implication when proposing job changes
- ❖ Be clearer in directions to staff and timelines required
- ❖ Need practice in following through communicating with staff (i.e. changing work schedule)
- ❖ Need to understand importance of being able to shift priorities quickly

### Clinical

- ❖ Simplify medical jargon, use terminology easily understood by the clients
- ❖ Need to improve establishing rapport with patients, ask about concerns, expectations and goals
- ❖ Investigate patients' concerns, issues and level of knowledge
- ❖ Organize information before instructing patients
- ❖ Missed pertinent info when doing a diet history, use checklists from Internship Manual
- ❖ Work on controlling the interview in terms of both timing and keeping on track
- ❖ Need to improve non-verbal communication with patients (eye-contact, posture, position, movement, facial expression, tone of voice)

### Community

- ❖ Need to investigate all existing programs to deal with identified need
- ❖ Speak slowly and clearly when doing presentations
- ❖ Give clients more time to share their ideas before intervening
- ❖ Need to establish eye-contact with group members when doing presentations

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