

## DIETETIC INTERNSHIPS IN THE CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS:

### A **Win-Win** Learning Opportunity For Your State Agency

#### Dietetic Internships at a Glance

To become a licensed Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN), individuals must complete required coursework and 1,200 hours of supervised practice through a dietetic internship (DI). During the DI, aspiring RDNs complete rotations and obtain hands-on experience in several key practice areas ranging from clinical nutrition to public health/community nutrition. Interns must complete learning activities that address various topics and populations, including low-income and nutritionally at-risk women, children, and infants. An intern can complete a rotation at your State agency, serving as a win-win for you and the DI.

#### What a Dietetic Intern Can Do For You and Your State Agency

Dietetic interns have completed extensive coursework on many nutrition-related topics. They can bring this knowledge and experience to your State agency and help with nutrition technical assistance and training in Child Nutrition Programs, including:

- ◆ Developing flyers, handouts, and activities for hands-on learning to identify whole grain-rich foods, vegetable sub-groups, and other key food groups;
- ◆ Developing and providing training on how to read a product ingredient list and Nutrition Facts Label;
- ◆ Revising existing sample menus or creating new ones;
- ◆ Conducting a presentation on the most current Dietary Guidelines;
- ◆ Conducting a nutrition education presentation;
- ◆ Supporting promotional and partnership activities that promote outreach in the Child Nutrition Programs for children, teachers, caretakers, and parents;
- ◆ Participating in, and supporting, onsite nutrition training opportunities; and
- ◆ Fostering creativity and new ideas.

*Having an intern gives a preceptor added motivation to “stay on top of our game” by researching current nutrition topics and trends, staying abreast with technology and being a positive mentor for future dietitians. I promote the many benefits and positive outcomes of having Dietitians in School Food Service Director positions in hopes to encourage more RDs to find employment in the School Nutrition field. I feel like I learn as much from them as they learn from me!*

**– Molly Stenberg, RD, Montana Team Nutrition Program**

\*Please note, that while USDA strongly supports dietetic interns completing rotations at State agencies to improve the effectiveness of Child Nutrition Programs when appropriate, this support does not constitute endorsement of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics, the accrediting agency for the Academy, sets standards for nutrition and dietetics education programs (including dietetic internships), evaluates programs against the standards and awards accreditation to programs demonstrating compliance with the standards.

## Additional benefits of hosting dietetic interns at your State agency, include:

- ◆ Building your professional skills, such as:
  - Team leadership;
  - Training;
  - Mentoring skills; and
  - Communication skills.
- ◆ Creating a strong partnership between a local university and your agency, and serving as a potential opportunity for future nutrition educational opportunities for State agency staff; and
- ◆ Helping train early professionals with nutrition expertise to take on positions at the State or local level in the Child Nutrition Programs, preparing them to meet Federal and local certification and professional hiring standards.

*The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the University of Minnesota School of Public Health in serving as a preceptor site for public health nutrition graduate students completing their dietetic internship requirements. While MDE has been able to open students' eyes to the possibilities for registered dietitians to work with USDA Child Nutrition Programs, the student interns have opened our eyes to the creativity, capacity and potential of our State's up and coming nutrition leaders, often helping us to see our everyday opportunities and challenges from a new perspective.*

— **Kara Mitterholzer, MPH, RD,**  
**Minnesota Department of Education**

## How to reach out to Dietetic Internship Programs:

If you are interested in having dietetic interns complete a rotation at your State agency, you should contact the program director of your nearest DI program. You can search for the nearest DI program and the contact information for the DI program director: <http://www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/content.aspx?id=6442485424>.

Let them know you are interested in becoming a site for their DI program. Together, you will complete the affiliation agreement for your participation and develop learning objectives for the intern.

## Talking points for conversations with DI program directors:

- ◆ Express your need for assistance in implementing the new CACFP meal patterns.
- ◆ Inquire about the possibility of being a DI rotation site.
- ◆ Discuss potential activities that the intern could help with at your State agency.
- ◆ Ask about the details of their DI program: start date, length, number of interns, etc., to get a better sense of when you could have interns and for how long.
- ◆ Provide general information about your State agency.

*We very much enjoy working with dietetic interns at the Iowa Department of Education's Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services. We take the opportunity to encourage their future work in Child Nutrition Programs. During their time with us, they may participate in an administrative review, assist with current projects, meet partners, and get a glimpse of what is involved in the administration of the Child Nutrition Programs at the State level. We try to tailor their experience to their specific area of interest. This is a great opportunity to form a relationship with interns who are interested in working in Child Nutrition Programs in the future. We learn a lot from each other!*

— **Patti Delger, RDN, LD, Iowa Department of Education**