

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 FOODSERVICE

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 a resume and the KADDI summary sheet that is linked below.
- Ask your interviewer how he or she became a dietitian and where they did their supervised practice hours.
- Take a copy of the KADDI facility form. What kind of foodservice do they have? Tell the dietitian KADDI has already developed a curriculum that has assignments designed to benefit student and the facility. These 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? KADDI has a clinical curriculum that includes doing nutrition care worksheets for patients with various diagnoses including diabetes, heart failure, strokes, kidney and GI diseases. Interns are also required to complete an in-depth case study and give an oral presentation.
- Do they see outpatients? Do the dietitians teach classes or participate in any community-outreach activities for which having an intern might be helpful? The KADDI curriculum includes developing a lesson plan and education material as well as making handouts.
- If you have a compelling reason for doing an internship 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 complete your education and 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.

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/acend/training-and-volunteer-opportunities/preceptors-and-mentors/find-a-preceptor>

Be sure to ask the preceptor if they are going to charge a fee. Most will not, but some do and this is not covered by your KADDI tuition.

KADDI 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 still an intern and ACEND, the national accrediting body for nutrition and dietetics, does not allow interns to be used to replace employees.

You are responsible to find your own preceptors, however, the KADDI director is available to coach you if needed. We have a preceptor handbook and are happy to train dietitians to be preceptors. The Keith & Associates legal department must secure affiliation agreements with all facilities before you do rotations there. This service is included in your KADDI tuition.

It takes a special kind of person to set up and complete a distance internship. Do you have what it takes?