

**Guideline**  
**Supporting Clinical Student Placements:**  
**Allied Health**

**Allied Health:** Calgary, Central, Edmonton, North and South zones

December 1, 2014

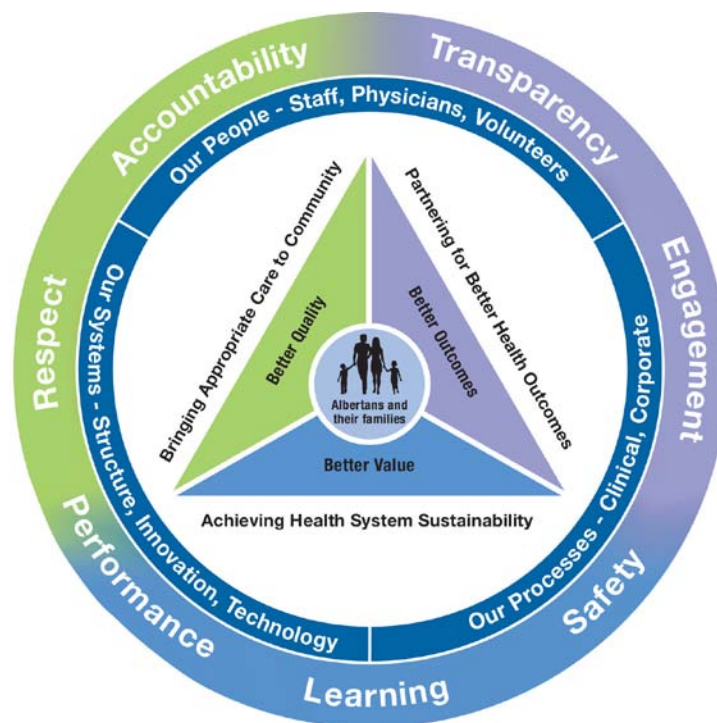
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## Purpose

Alberta Health Services, Allied Health is committed to creating and sustaining a culture that supports interesting and challenging clinical student placements.

AHS acknowledges the importance of positive learning experiences in ensuring high quality future services, enhancing recruitment activities and creating a sustainable health workforce. Providing quality clinical learning experiences is a component of ensuring that future Allied Health professionals and support staff acquire high standards of clinical skills and knowledge which reinforces the commitment to our organizational value of “Learning” as indicated on the AHS strategic wheel.



AHS recognizes the benefit of students to our organization and acknowledges that supporting student placements is a responsibility of all levels of the organization.

This guideline provides overarching principles and strategies to support student placements in Allied Health, Alberta Health Services. It presents the framework for the development of local expectations and procedures and the momentum for cultural change. The guideline is subject to Manager support.

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## Principles

Clinical placements are available to students pursuing health care education at a Canadian or International institution in which a clinical placement is a required component of their program of study.

AHS leadership will foster a culture of learning and an environment where clinical education is valued as part of the professional role.

Placements or other learning activities are offered in all service streams and programs.

All AHS employees acknowledge the expectation that all full-time and part-time professional staff support clinical education.

Managers will support staff to participate in the provision of clinical education and will encourage opportunities for staff to develop and enhance skills in student supervision as part of their professional role.

Student placements will be prioritized according to internally developed parameters. Consideration will be given to location of program, residency of the student, employment status of student with AHS and recruitment needs.

Placements will endeavor to match the preceptor, student learning needs, placement setting and practicum learning objectives to achieve learning outcomes working toward entry level to practice.

Due to potential conflict of interest, AHS staff enrolled in a post-secondary program for which a clinical placement is required are discouraged from completing the placement in their work setting. Such students are encouraged to seek opportunities elsewhere (see page 6 “Considerations for Placement in work setting” for further information).

## AHS staff in the Preceptor Role

AHS job descriptions include clinical supervision of students as a role and responsibility of professional and support staff.

Students are our future colleagues. Taking a student can help staff gain new perspectives on clinical practice and develop other skills in areas such as adult education and communication. Students have a wealth of knowledge about new trends in assessment and intervention which can help staff examine and consider their own practice and enrich their professional skill set. Above else, the benefit of taking a student allows staff to give back to their profession and do what others did for them when they were students. Preceptors are valued and appreciated, not only by AHS but also from Faculty who rely on preceptors to provide the clinical education of students, without which students would be unable to graduate and enter the workforce.

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## In AHS, preceptors are

- Employed in permanent or temporary part-time or full-time positions within AHS.
- Expected to refer to Regulatory College guidelines where available to determine their readiness to supervise a student. In the absence of College guidelines, AHS suggests that preceptors have a minimum of 6-12 months experience working in their current profession and a minimum of six weeks experience in the current program/service.
- Available to provide one or more placements each year dependent on length of placements.
- Available for at least 75% of the time frame of the clinical placement (not on vacation or leave during the specific placement).
- Able to provide daily supervision to the student and/or has assigned supervision coverage during planned or unexpected time away.
- Working part-time (4 or 5 days a week) to support full-time clinical placements.
- Working part-time (fewer than 4 days per week) to share the supervision of students with another preceptor on the same or at a different site.
- Supported in the mentoring of a new preceptor by an experienced preceptor. New or less experienced staff can be mentored by more experienced preceptors by sharing a student or arranging for a more experienced preceptor to guide and work with them during their initial preceptor experiences.
- Encouraged to complete the AHS preceptor eLearning modules and/or attend a student supervision workshop prior to taking a student.
- Expected, where possible to make themselves available for another placement that year if a placement is cancelled or is declined.

## Overcoming barriers

- In small interprofessional or specialized teams, placement requests will be considered at the team level. Recognizing that there is competition for placements from students of multiple disciplines, additional coordination may be required to determine how each provider can best accommodate placements.
- The preceptor will be supported by their team in relations to caseload and clinical learning opportunities. It is expected that the members of their team will support their colleague (the preceptor) by sharing their caseload and providing mentoring and learning opportunities where applicable as to benefit the student and the team as a whole.
- Support for new preceptors can be obtained from a number of leaders in their practice area (manager, site student coordinator, and practice leader where available), as well as from Faculty.
- AHS recognizes that workload pressures from vacancies, vacations, and new staff training/orientation may affect a service's ability to support students at a given time. It is understood that the workload of the preceptor can increase during the earlier days of a student placement. Each program or service area may determine how to best adjust team workload during placement times for maximum benefit to all members of the team throughout the placement experience.

- Alternative models of supervision including the shared placement model and collaborative placement model are supported and encouraged. Such models can be a way for teams to increase their capacity to support student placements.
- For information, strategies on how to support and facilitate alternative models of supervision, please contact Health Professions Strategy and Practice: Student Placement Team ([student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca)) or Faculty at the post-secondary institution.
- Preceptor learning Modules are available via MyLearningLink: <http://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/1881.asp> - search “preceptor education” in Courses & Registration. Or <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/employee/modules/preceptor/preceptor.html>
- Access to some work space is important, however, it is understood that most sites will not have dedicated space for students. The need for space may be addressed in a variety of creative ways including:
  - “Portable” office for students (i.e. a box or case of the required materials which can be carried to any available space).
  - Shared space with other students or preceptor.
  - Portable/fold away touchdown space.
  - Use of library or other communal space.

## Responsibilities

The department, program, or unit manager is ultimately responsible for the approval of a student placement. For reasons of capacity and coordination, all staff must ensure that a placement they are offering has been discussed and approved by their manager or designate and/or their team.

Many sites have designated student placement coordinators to manage student placements for their site/program. This is the individual with whom the AHS student placement team and Faculty will connect with to discuss placements in that clinical setting.

Clear, timely communication regarding clinical placements among the AHS student placement team, preceptor, staff, manager(s), site student placement coordinators, the post-secondary institutions and students, is important. Potential changes will be communicated to involved parties with all possible advance notice.

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## Participant Roles

### AHS & the Student Placement Team

The AHS student placement team is responsible for the broad management of student placements in AHS. The Student Placement Team is working to streamline the student placement process and support those involved in student clinical education. Their role is to:

- provide support to programs and facilities to encourage and assist with clinical education.
- liaison between AHS (managers, designated site clinical coordinators, and/or preceptors) and post-secondary programs regarding students participating in clinical placements.
- ensure all legal requirements (student placement agreement, police information check, immunization status, and confidentiality requirements) have been met prior to a student coming to AHS for placement.
- help out-of-province and international students navigate the student placement process.
- provide post-secondary institution with information/policies applicable to students completing placements with AHS.
- provide students with adequate orientation to the organization, and links to applicable corporate policies. The AHS General Student Orientation is available on-line at: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/careers/page521.asp>.  
*Site and program information as well as local policies and specific service requirements will be provided by the site clinical coordinator or preceptor.*
- report and share the contribution of the disciplines and specific sites annually upon request.

### Managers

Managers support the expectation of student placements and ensure on-going support for clinical education. Managers:

- ensure preceptor role is included in job descriptions
- ensure preceptor role is mentioned in job postings and during the hiring process.
- set targets as a potential goal for the department/unit/program
- incorporate individual staff needs for preceptor training, required mentorship, goal to take on a student into annual performance reviews
- support staff to take preceptor training
- create a culture that is supportive of student placements.

### Preceptor

Preceptors play a vital role in a successful student placement. In AHS, preceptors will be supported by the Educational Institution, Management team, colleagues and AHS student placement team. In their role, preceptors:



- act as a role model for the student.
- provide a safe/comfortable learning environment.
- help the student determine their learning needs and develop their learning plan.
- ensure that the student learning plan provides for experiences that are consistent with the student's demonstrated competencies and learning needs.
- maintain communication with faculty at the post-secondary institution and local student placement coordinators as required.
- offer regular constructive feedback and evaluation.
- inform student and educational institution immediately of any concerns related to the student's performance.
- contact faculty immediately with any concerns related to the placement.
- provide direct and/or indirect supervision according to the student's knowledge, skills & abilities, aligned with post-secondary institution requirements and appropriate to clinical setting.
- maintain responsibility for the overall plan of care for the clients/patients on his/her caseload.
- support students to collaborate with all members included in the interdisciplinary health care team.
- ensure their site clinical placement coordinator or the AHS student placement team is aware of any placement they have agreed to provide.
- prioritize student needs over system needs with a goal of working toward entry level to practice.

As per AHS Conflict of Interest Bylaw AHS staff are not permitted to personally accept payment or stipends directly from a University or training program. If a University offers a stipend, it can be accepted as a donation to a "fund" in their practice area.

## Staff

All members of the preceptor's team are important for a successful student placement. The preceptor's colleagues and teammates play an important role in supporting the preceptor and the student throughout the student placement experience. Staff:

- support preceptor by adjusting caseload as necessary during the placement; taking on tasks to offload the preceptor's caseload at the beginning of a placement and identifying interesting cases for the student as the placement progresses.
- share experiences as appropriate.
- facilitate learning experiences as requested.
- support interprofessional opportunities.
- act as a role model for the student re: professionalism in the work place, demonstrating AHS values- respectful workplace.

## Educational Institution





A member of Faculty must be accessible to both the student and the site at all times during the placement. AHS expects that the educational institution will provide preceptors with resources/tools/education to support the student placement. Contact between the educational institution and preceptor may include a mid-point visit, phone call or email to check in. Faculty:

- collaborates with sites in arranging and maximizing placements which meet the needs of the students and the service.
- communicates with site and the preceptor regarding policies, procedures and standards related to clinical education.
- provides site specific education related to clinical education where needed.
- provides direct support to site based placement coordinators, preceptors and students.
- outlines the learning objectives and expectations for the preceptor.
- provides preceptors with tools to evaluate student performance.
- recognizes the contributions of preceptors.
- ensures placements meet practicum learning objectives.

## Student

Students are our future colleagues and play a key role in a successful student placement experience. Students are expected to:

- be accountable for their actions.
- be responsible for identifying and communicating their learning needs and goals.
- be responsible for documenting the care they provide.
- provide safe, professional care according to the plan of care.
- be respectful and adhere to AHS and program policies and procedures.
- communicate any concerns and provide feedback to the, preceptor, AHS staff and Faculty about their experience.
- demonstrate professional conduct.
- follow their preceptors' schedule which may include evening, weekend, and holiday shifts.

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## Considerations for Placements in work setting

AHS employees who are furthering their education and are enrolled in a post-secondary program in which a **placement** is a requirement of graduation are discouraged from completing a placement in on the same unit/program/department where they work. In areas where no other options are available, a Conflict of Interest Declaration should be completed and discussed with their manager (and professional practice leader(s) where available).

When considering a placement in a current work setting, there must be a clear line between employment responsibilities and student learning objectives. To avoid a conflict of interest situation, everyone involved (student, faculty, employer, preceptor) must be aware of when the individual is functioning as an employee and when they are functioning as a student. The individual should not be engaged in “work” tasks when in their student role, nor should they be completing student activities while completing their work duties.

While in the student role, Standards of Practice of the student role will be followed versus the Standards of Practice of the employee role.

Where possible, the person supervising the placement (preceptor) will not be the same person the student directly reports to in their employee role.

AHS does not support paid placements. A student who is employed by AHS cannot be paid while completing placement requirements that are not part of their regular job duties.

Please contact the Health Professions Strategy and Practice: Student Placement Team with any questions: [student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca).

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## Organizational Requirements: Things you should know

Please see the AHS student placement website for information about placement process and pre-requisites: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/careers/page521.asp>.

All requests for student placements in AHS should be received by the [Health Professions Strategy and Practice: Student Placement Team](#). Requests received directly from students or requests directed by educational institutions to specific sites within AHS should not be considered without first being sent to the [Health Professions Strategy and Practice: Student Placement Team](#). If staff are approached directly by a student or an educational institution seeking a placement, please connect with the [Health Professions Strategy and Practice: Student Placement Team](#) before proceeding. ([student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca)).

Students coming to AHS for placement must be covered under a [student placement agreement](#). This agreement covers legal requirements for completing a placement with AHS including: Police Information Checks, immunization standards, privacy and confidentiality requirements.

The student placement team is responsible for ensuring the student placement agreement (and all legal requirements) is in place and for tracking placements within the organization utilizing the [Health Sciences Placement Network](#) (HSPnet) wherever possible.

In order to equitably distribute all placements in a timely manner, and to have enough time to prepare for a placement, requests will be considered within 6 months of the start date of the placement.

Potential preceptors must obtain manager (or delegate) approval in order to ensure capacity and support within the team is available.

Each zone will have different processes and requirements for access to IT systems. In AHS - Allied Health, requests for access to IT systems must be authorized by an employee with the appropriate delegation of authority level (manager or above). Should students be required to document electronically or access patient information found in an electronic health record, IT access must be arranged. It is not acceptable for preceptors to share their passwords with students.

AHS does its best to accommodate all requests, however placements are not guaranteed.

AHS reserves the right to cancel, reschedule or move a clinical placement to an alternate site, at any time. AHS understands that a late cancellation may result in a student not having a required placement for graduation; the Site/Program will explore every possible option before cancelling a confirmed placement.

In the event of any issues that arise during the placement, preceptors and students should try and resolve concerns at the site level first. Any issues or concerns that can't be resolved at the site level must be immediately brought to the attention of the educational institution for resolution by the educational institution, the student and an AHS designate (preceptor, student placement team, manager) where appropriate.

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## Appendix A

### Resources/References:

- Alberta College of Occupational Therapists: <http://www.acot.ca/>
  - Guidelines for the Assignment/Delegation of Occupational Therapy Services to Support Personnel (2005): [http://www.acot.ca/files/Guidelines\\_Delegation\\_Support\\_Personnel.pdf](http://www.acot.ca/files/Guidelines_Delegation_Support_Personnel.pdf)
- Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists: <http://acslpa.ab.ca/>
- Alberta College of Social Workers: <http://www.acsw.ab.ca/>
- Alberta Health Services Student Placement website:  
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/careers/page521.asp>
- Alberta Health Services: Preceptor Learning Modules:  
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/careers/page529.asp>  
(Or via MyLearningLink: <http://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/1881.asp>)
- Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association: <http://www.alberta-tr.org/pages/home/default.aspx>
- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists: <http://www.caot.ca/>
  - Position statement: Professional responsibility in fieldwork education in occupational therapy  
<http://www.caot.ca/pdfs/positionstate/fieldwork%20education%20%20Position%20Statement%20Final%202012.pdf>
- Canadian Nurses Association: <http://www.cna-aiic.ca/>
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association: <http://www.physiotherapy.ca/>
- College of Alberta Psychologists: <http://cap.ab.ca/frnPage.aspx?Page=Index>
- College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta: <http://www.nurses.ab.ca/>
- Physiotherapy Alberta: <http://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/>
  - Supervision Resource Guide for Alberta Physiotherapists (2008):  
[http://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/physiotherapists/resources\\_to\\_help\\_you\\_meet\\_practice\\_standards/supervision](http://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/physiotherapists/resources_to_help_you_meet_practice_standards/supervision)

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- Speech and Audiology Canada: <http://sac-oac.ca/>
  - Therapist Assistant Association of Alberta: <http://thaaa.ca/>
  - Top 10 Reasons to take a Student:  
[http://osot.ubc.ca/files/2010/09/10\\_Reasons\\_to\\_Take\\_a\\_Student.pdf](http://osot.ubc.ca/files/2010/09/10_Reasons_to_Take_a_Student.pdf)
  - University of Calgary
    - Faculty of Social Work – Field Education:
      - Calgary: <http://fsw.ucalgary.ca/calgary/field-education>
      - Central and Northern Alberta: <http://fsw.ucalgary.ca/central-and-northern-alberta/field-education>
      - Southern Alberta: <http://fsw.ucalgary.ca/southern-alberta/field-education>
  - University of Alberta
    - Department of Physical therapy - supervision resources:  
<http://rehabilitation.ualberta.ca/departments/physical-therapy/clinical-education/clinicians/supervision-resources>
    - Department of Occupational Therapy – Information for clinicians:  
<http://rehabilitation.ualberta.ca/departments/occupational-therapy/clinical-education/information-for-clinicians>
    - Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders – Clinical Educator Resources:  
<http://rehabilitation.ualberta.ca/departments/communication-sciences-and-disorders/clinical-component/clinical-educator-resources-and-screencasts>

## Appendix B

### Glossary

#### **Educational Institution**

An institution in which a student enrolled in a clinical or non- clinical program of study is required to complete a placement.

#### **Health Sciences Placement Network (HSPnet)**

HSPnet is an electronic system which provides a web-enabled database and tools that streamline coordination of placement processes, and improve communication among Practice Education (PE) partners including educational programs, receiving sites, course leaders and faculty/instructors, preceptors, and students. HSPnet tracks the management of PE activities for health sciences students across a province. PE management activities include coordinating clinical placements (also known as preceptorships, clerkships, internships, or practica) and related activities such as policy management and agreement tracking, preceptor recognition, instructor assignment and scheduling, collaborative resolution of scheduling conflicts and interprofessional placements. HSPnet streamlines manual processes for managing PE, improves communications and information sharing, and brings together multiple local data sets to provide better system-wide information.

#### **Placement**

The practicum placement of a student with AHS for the purpose of fulfilling the practical component of their educational program (AHS Student Placement Agreement, 2014). Such placements are unpaid.

#### **Preceptor**

A health care provider that is paired with a student from the same discipline at a specific point of the education program to help the student learn the roles in a particular area of practice. The preceptor supervises and evaluates the student. (Council of University Teaching Hospitals, 2001). Other terms used include supervisor or field supervisor, field instructor, practicum host, field placement host, mentor. (Saskatchewan Academic Health Sciences Network, 2010).

#### **Site Clinical Coordinator**

The individual at the site or program level responsible for coordinating student placements.



### **Student**

An individual registered in a post-secondary educational program participating in a placement that is a requirement of graduation.

### **Interprofessional Team/Interprofessional Collaborative Practice**

Multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds working together with patients, families, caregivers and communities to deliver the highest quality care (Interprofessional Collaborative Practice - WHO, 2010).

### **Student Placement Agreement (SPA)**

Legal document outlining the terms and conditions of the student placement with Alberta Health Services. The AHS SPA template can be found at:

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/careers/docs/WhereDoYouFit/cp-stu-spa.pdf>