

# EXTERNSHIP HANDBOOK

## *Professional Development and the Externship Program*

The Professional Development Course is a culmination of all of your professional development activities while at OIC. This course utilizes both individualized and group learning methods. The course focuses on key elements such as defining career goals, developing effective job search techniques, developing resumes, and developing skills for attending professional interviews. The Professional Development course is a prerequisite for the externship. Each student who attends OIC is required to complete thirty (30) hours in the Professional Development Course.

It is our belief that the professional development of each individual begins the moment he or she elects to begin training for a new professional field. At OIC, professional development is an integrated part of what we do. The moment you begin training at OIC, you will begin working with the staff, instructors, and Employment Specialist in order to recognize and locate areas of your own professional development that you would like to improve.

It is also our belief that professional development includes both general and specific concepts. Professional development requires all of us to think about the general aspects of good professionalism. No matter the training program, you should recognize immediately there is a general professional demeanor that is central to all of our training areas and to what is expected of you. Things like positive attitude, good attendance, and good leadership are skills that will help you excel in your field; these skills are general characteristics of good professionalism.

At the same time, each of our training programs requires students to develop a specific set of professional skills, knowledge areas, and abilities that are distinct to their fields of study. To develop professionally as a Certified Nursing Assistant, for example, requires a student to develop the ability to take a person's blood pressure (this is a specific professional skill). At the same time, your employer will expect you to do so with a good attitude (a general professional skill). Developing professionally requires you to think about all of those areas. As you go through your training program at OIC, you will develop professionally in both specific and general areas.

It is our belief that professional development is unique to each individual. Each person who enters OIC brings with them different experiences in regard to the general and specific areas of professional development. Our goal at OIC is to work with each individual in order to customize a plan to help them improve in the areas they would like to improve, providing them with the best opportunity to develop professionally in their respective fields of study.

It is also our belief that Professional Development is continuous; it does not end when you graduate. Receiving your certification does not mean that you have completed developing as a professional within your specific field: there will always be new things to learn.

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A specific outline of the grading requirements for both the externship and the Professional Development class will be provided to you by OIC's Employment Specialist.

## *What is an Externship?*

The externship provides students with opportunities to gain real-world experiences in their specific fields of study. OIC Training Academy partners with many local hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, dentists' offices, and pharmacies to provide students with a wide selection of areas where they can work, learn, and gain the skills they will use throughout their careers. The externship is a unique part of each student's program area, providing students with an exceptional opportunity to meet and interact with a different array of professionals within each respective field of study. As soon as students begin their training programs, it is important for them to begin thinking about what types of externship sites they would prefer.

The number of hours required for each student may differ, depending on the program of study. For the duration of the externship, students are required to complete a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week if attending night program and (30) hours per week if attending day programs, but not exceed forty (40) hours per week. It is strongly suggested that you complete your externship as soon as your schedule allows. It is also expected that each student will actively seek employment during his or her externship placement.

## *When Does the Externship Take Place?*

Students will be placed in an externship site only after completing the Professional Development Course. The only exception is for those individuals enrolled in the Certified Nurse Aide program. These students will complete their externship (or "clinicals") under the close supervision of an OIC staff member at a pre-determined externship site, as part of their classroom instruction.

There will generally be no break between the conclusion of classroom instruction and the placement in the externship site, unless training related employment has been obtained.

## *Pre-Requisites for Externship Placement*

Prior to being placed into an externship, the student must have completed all classroom assignments and have a "C" average in all classes, achieving a 2.0 GPA overall. Students must have on file a completed physical examination, proof of tuberculin test and hepatitis immunization records. Students receiving financial aid are to meet with a financial aid counselor prior to placement in an externship site. Any outstanding balances or fees must be paid before placement can occur. Also, every student must possess a valid driver's license and have access to a reliable vehicle.

Students must also have shown that they possess the capabilities required to be

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successful in an externship site, such as: professionalism and good attendance.

Any student falling below 80% attendance in the classroom prior to externship will enter into the externship on a probationary status.

## *Credit for Professional Experience and the Externship*

Students who have had prior experiences in their fields of study (i.e. through prior employment; through school activities; through volunteer activities) are eligible to receive credit towards their externship through the following procedure:

1. Student provides documentation of related experiences to the employment specialist
2. The employment specialist determines whether documented experiences meet eligibility requirements
3. The employment specialist will adjust externship hours accordingly (students can reduce their required externship hours by up to **40%**-- 84 hours of a 210 hour externship or 48 hours of a 120 hour externship.)

## *Placement Into an Externship Site*

OIC has established a unique relationship with each of its externship site partners. Because of our partnerships, OIC has been able to maintain an excellent job placement rate for each of its programs. Our externship partners value the OIC Training Program and its students just as we have come to value them; throughout the years, OIC has developed a positive reputation in the employment community, making the externship site a valuable part of our entire training process.

OIC Training Academy places students into a variety of healthcare settings in and around this area. A few examples of externship sites are listed below:

Marion Health Care	Wishing Well	Dr. Pagano
Shinnston Health Care	Health Right	Whitehall Medical, PLLC
Dr. Ronald Croteau	Comfort Dental	Ruby Memorial
Dr. Dominic Raymond	Dr. Peter Ang	Dr. Edwin Morris
Total Dental	Premier Pediatrics	Valley Health Care Systems
Veterans Hospital	Total Family Care	Med Plus

When thinking about the externship, the student and the Employment Specialist should take several things into consideration, including the availability of sites in direct proximity to the student's area of residence; student preferences; and student interests. Students should consider the externship as an opportunity for them to experience the types of areas where they envision themselves working in the future.

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Each student will be required to complete a progress review session and exit interview with an OIC staff member. The progress review helps us to determine each student's employment goals and assess their strengths/weaknesses. At the progress review, we will also discuss the type of business in which you would like to work and the general area in which you would like to work.

The OIC Employment Specialist will work with each student to develop an individualized externship experience when at all possible. If students have a specific site in mind, they are encouraged to communicate with the employment specialist so that arrangements can be made. By taking initiative and researching the different externship site possibilities, students ultimately begin to take responsibility for their own learning experience, making the externship experience a success for everyone. Although there is no guarantee for requested sites, OIC will put forth its best effort to make sure that we find a site appropriate for your specific skills and abilities.

\*Students should not contact sites for general information, and are not permitted to set up the externship sites themselves. The Employment Specialist will coordinate all placements and contact students regarding their assignments.

## Externship Attendance

Students in the Externship Program are permitted three (3) absences, and three (3) tardies are equal to one (1) absence when in a 210 hour externship. When in a 120 hour externship, students are allowed two (2) absences and two (2) tardies are equivalent to one absence. Exceeding the allowed number of absences will result in the student being placed on externship probation. A second violation of this policy will result in the student entering into a modified externship program. Further violations of the attendance policy will require the student to find employment within 45 days in order to complete their respective program of study.

## *Expectations And Performance of Students – OIC's Do and Don't List*

The externship is designed for several purposes. You are expected to perform duties that were learned in school, as well as to learn and refine new skills that are taught by the externship site. The ability to perform is important, but equally of value is your ability to be a good team member.

### **You must:**

- Treat your externship placement as a real job
- Use appropriate interpersonal skills
- Display a good attitude and a willingness to learn
- Have good attendance and be punctual

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- Comply with all confidentiality policies
- Present good personal hygiene
- Wear appropriate work attire and have a neat, clean and professional appearance
- Pre-arrange childcare
- Have a reliable vehicle or public transportation
- Have sufficient insurance coverage for both themselves and their car (if applicable)
- Adhere to your externship schedule
- Treat externship site staff and patients with respect
- Be aware of the costs associated with the externship process, such as funding for gas, childcare and professional attire
- Be able to accept constructive criticism and change any habits that might be unacceptable on the externship site
- Work efficiently and follow directions carefully
- Follow the policies of the externship site
- Learn as much as you can about the externship site by reading their office policy handbook and paying close attention to postings on bulletin boards or office memos
- Report any problems immediately to your externship site supervisor or to the OIC's Employment Specialist
- Exhibit good time management, budgeting and planning skills
- Realize that initiative does make a difference
- Gainfully seek employment opportunities while during the time of your externship – site supervisors must be given at least 24 hours notice in the event of a scheduled interview

## **Do not:**

- Gossip, complain or interrupt
- Show up late or call off at the last minute
- Insist that the office is performing a skill differently than what you learned in school
- Ask the physician to treat you or your family during your externship, should an illness occur during that time
- Make or receive excessive phone calls while at the externship site
- Ask the physician to dispense any medications from the office
- Wear excessive jewelry (including body piercings) or makeup
- Have visitors at the externship site, including your significant other or children
- Take excessive breaks (including those for smoking)
- Perform any procedure beyond your individual capabilities
- Neglect your assigned tasks
- Complete personal errands during your externship hours
- Leave your cell phone on during hours when you are at your externship

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- Openly display tattoos while at the externship site
- Allow problems on the site to go unresolved

Please be advised that this is not a complete list of things that you should and should not be doing at an externship site. You should use your best judgment regarding actions undertaken at your placement site.

## *The Importance of Confidentiality*

Students participating in the externship process are entrusted with a great deal of responsibility and are called upon to exercise discretion and sensitivity to matters of confidentiality and individual rights and interests. In their placements, students should be guided by standards of professional conduct and ethics. Students should also expect that the business in which they are placed also embrace these standards. Below you will find further information on the issue of confidentiality:

The first-ever federal privacy standards to protect patients' medical records and other health information provided to health plans, doctors, hospitals and other health care providers took effect on April 14, 2003. Developed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), these new standards provide patients with access to their medical records and more control over how their personal health information is used and disclosed. They represent a uniform, federal floor of privacy protections for consumers across the country. State laws providing additional protections to consumers are not affected by this new rule. These materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa>.

The new privacy regulations ensure a national floor of privacy protections for patients by limiting the ways that health plans, pharmacies, hospitals and other covered entities can use patients' personal medical information. The regulations protect medical records and other individually identifiable health information, whether it is on paper, in computers or communicated orally. Key provisions of these new standards include: access to medical records, notice of privacy practices, limits on the use of personal medication information, prohibition on marketing, stronger state laws, confidential communications and complaints.

## *Responsibilities of the Externship Site*

The work site will provide an orientation to each student, including a discussion of the rules and regulations of the site. The site will also provide the student with a learning experience through practical application with regular employees in meaningful tasks related to the student's field of study. The externship site will provide supervision and suitable working conditions for each student. Students will not be discriminated against due to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, or political affiliation or belief.

The externship site guarantees that students furnished by the OIC will not replace regular employees. The externship site is not responsible for any type of

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compensation, including wages and benefits for students for the contracted hours of the externship. The externship site will not be held responsible for Worker's Compensation, accidents or any other injuries sustained by students.

Every Friday, the site supervisor or student will submit the weekly timesheet (signed by the supervisor) and supply the Employment Specialist with a final evaluation of a student's performance at the end of their externship. The externship site also agrees to permit the OIC staff the opportunity to visit any department where students may be assigned for the purpose of evaluating the student, monitoring the program's activities and to provide career-counseling services.

The externship site has been instructed to contact OIC Training Academy immediately regarding any issues of attendance problems, misconduct, unsatisfactory performance or other areas of concern prior to dismissing students in an attempt to resolve such issues. During the externship, the site will permit students to actively pursue gainful employment, under the understanding that students will provide notification of schedule changes in the event of an interview.

If a student feels as though the externship placement site is not meeting these guidelines, they are to seek the immediate assistance of the Employment Specialist.

## *Responsibilities of OIC Training Academy*

The OIC Training Academy will do everything it can to maintain the integrity of the externship program. This includes coordinating communication and providing counseling to students on an individual basis.

The OIC will provide qualified students to the externship site for a pre-determined amount of time. If for some reason we find that a student is not suited for their externship site, accommodations can be made to place the student in an alternative site.

The OIC Training Academy will provide professional liability insurance for the acts and omissions of their students in the amount of \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) per occurrence. Students provided by OIC will be instructed on universal precautions and OSHA guidelines.

Every Monday, the Employment Specialist will send (via fax transmission) a blank timesheet for each student to their externship site supervisor.

Routine site visits will also be made to each participating externship agency. At this time, we will acquire feedback on each student's performance, as well as take pictures of students in their externship site.

It is the intention of OIC to make every effort toward the success of each student's externship, showing support for the student for the duration of the externship.

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## *Externship Grace Period*

OIC recognizes that obstacles may arise at any point in a student's training experience; the externship is no exception. Because the entrance into the externship can represent a major point of transition for some students, each student will be allotted a first-week grace period where they are able to make adjustments in the externship process if needed. If a student finds himself/herself having problems within the first week of his/her externship placement, the student should request to meet with the employment specialist to determine an adjusted plan for success; in some instances, the employment specialist may initiate this action. In any event, the employment specialist will work with you to identify problem areas and help you to determine the best plan of action for your overall success; in some instances this may mean that you return to the original externship site. In the event that you are not able to return to your original externship site, the employment specialist will attempt to work with you to find an alternative site. If you are unable to complete your externship hours at a new site, you will be required to enter into a modified externship program (see *below*).

The most important thing to remember is to always maintain communication with the employment specialist or OIC administrative staff in the event that problems arise. If problems arise at any point during the externship process, the employment specialist will work with the OIC administrative team and the student to develop the best plan for the student's success. It may be necessary for some students to complete their certification programs through an alternative externship pathway.

## *Modified and/or Externship Alternative*

There may be times when a student has to complete their certification through an alternative externship pathway. The following are some reasons that a student may be required to complete an alternative externship program:

- Unforeseen personal problems arise during the externship
- Attendance problems during externship
- Conflicts that are unable to be resolved between externship sites and students
- Student has not met all the qualifications stated in the professional development section of this handbook
- Medical or health related issues

If a student has problems during the regular externship, the OIC administrative team will work with the student to determine an individualized externship alternative; in part, this may require the student to complete additional hours in the professional development course, to participate in volunteer activities, and/or complete resume development activities, etc.

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The student's transcripts and certification will reflect his/her completion of the alternative externship program. It is important to note that those students who complete the regular externship program are better able to demonstrate to future employers that they have gained the real-world hands-on experiences that will allow them to perform the required tasks in their fields of study. The alternative externship program does not diminish any portion of the student's academic transcript, but it will demonstrate to employers that the student did not complete the external, real-world training activities that are part of the regular externship program.

## *Externship Probation, Automatic Termination and Failure to Complete*

If a student experiences a problem such as those listed below, he/she may be removed from their externship site, placed on probation and given counseling and guidance in order to correct the problem.

- Failure to pass the competencies set forth by OIC and the externship site supervisor
- Poor attendance or habitual tardiness. No more than three absences are acceptable. Three tardies equal one absence.
- Failure to notify the externship site supervisor and OIC's Employment Specialist in the event of an absence or tardy
- The student's failure to conduct himself or herself professionally (Please refer to this handbook's section on the "Expectation and Performance of Students: OIC's Do and Don't List)
- Any breach of confidentiality (intentional or unintentional)

### **Provisions of Probation**

Once a student has been placed on probation the following provisions will be in effect:

- The Employment Specialist and/or the site supervisor will advise the student of the violations
- The student will be placed on an improvement period during which time he/she will receive counseling and guidance. A written corrective action plan will be signed by the student and the Employment Specialist and placed in the student's file and may be reflected in the event of an employment reference.
- In some instances the student may return to the original externship site; however, in some cases the student may be placed into a different facility with frequent monitoring by the Employment Specialist. A committee composed of OIC administrative staff as well as the recommendation of the site supervisor will decide this on an individual basis.
- If the student continues to have difficulties after receiving probation, the employment specialist may recommend that the student enter into a modified externship program. A committee composed of OIC administrative staff will

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decide this on an individual basis.

- Failure to demonstrate improvement or repeated violations could result in a failing grade and/or termination from the program.

## **Automatic Termination**

The following violations are serious in nature and will not be tolerated. They will result in automatic and immediate termination from the program.

- Any blatant or intentional breach of confidentiality.
- The use and/or possession of alcohol, drugs, weapons or the demonstration of any violent act.
- Theft, vandalism or destruction of property.
- Repeated violations of OIC or externship site policies or procedures.

## **Failure to Complete**

Failure to complete all externship hours may result in a failing grade or an "incomplete" on a student's transcript. In addition, withdrawal or termination from the program will result in forfeiture of financial aid. The balance of all tuition and fees will become the responsibility of the student. Unpaid balances will be reported to a collection agency after thirty (30) days.

*Good Luck!*

By following professional guidelines and exhibiting a willingness to learn, you will find the externship to be a positive learning experience. If you have left the externship site supervisor with an impression that you are dependable, responsible and helpful person, you will have more success in your job search.

Be sure to leave a few copies of your resume with the office, should job opportunities arise later, or if the staff is aware of a position in another facility, they can assist you in the job search process. It is acceptable to ask for a letter of reference from the externship site supervisor or physician. Remember to send the externship office a "thank you" note for allowing the externship in their facility. This makes a good impression and will express your appreciation for the opportunity to learn in the facility. By adhering to these suggestions, you will find the externship experience to be one of great value.

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\*Please note: OIC Training Academy reserves the right to change any policies in this handbook. In the event of a change, each student will receive a copy of the revised policy.