

Questions and Answers Regarding Texas WIC Dietetic Internship (DI) - 2008

1. Why does Texas WIC have a dietetic internship?

The mission of the Texas WIC Dietetic Internship is to enhance the quality of nutrition services delivered to WIC clients and their communities. The dietetic internship is designed to increase the skill and performance of WIC nutritionists (non-RDs) so that they are able to provide more quality services to the WIC clientele in the area of high-risk problems in maternal and child nutrition.

2. Will Central Office WIC provide financial assistance to WIC local agencies if they have an applicant selected for an internship?

Yes. WIC Central Office will provide financial assistance to local agencies if they continue to employ and pay the nutritionist their full salary while participating in the internship. If the intern has to take leave without pay to participate in the internship, then the state agency will not provide additional financial assistance.

WIC Central Office will pay over contract approximately 50-70% of the intern's salary and benefits for the 8 months that he/she is participating in the internship. This financial assistance is provided to the WIC Local Agencies so they may hire temporary staff to help cover the clinics while their employee is participating in the internship.

3. What is the program calendar for the internship?

See Texas WIC DI Calendar for 2008 in the Texas WIC DI Prospective Student Brochure 2008.

4. How many interns can be selected for each class?

The internship can select up to ten (10) interns per year.

5. Is there a minimum number of years required working for WIC before a nutritionist can apply?

Any nutritionist currently working for a WIC local agency or WIC Central Office is eligible to apply. However, the WIC local agency director/DSHS Unit Manager should take into account the number of years of service, the individual's performance level, etc., when she/he is recommending an applicant. Years of WIC employment will be taken into consideration by the Texas WIC DI selection panel, but it's only one of several criteria considered.

6. Is a nutritionist in a part-time position or a temporary position eligible to apply?

A WIC nutritionist in a part-time position is eligible to apply. A WIC nutritionist in a temporary position will have to check with their local agency/DSHS employer regarding their employment situation. If the local agency or DSHS can not assure that the employee will remain employed during the internship as well as the 2 years after taking the registration examination for dietitians, then the nutritionist will not be eligible to apply.

7. Will more than one nutritionist from each local agency be able to apply?

The Texas WIC internship will accept more than one application from the same local agency. The local WIC agency director/DSHS Unit Manager may not be able to allow more than one nutritionist to participate in the internship each year.

8. Are DSHS Region and Central Office nutritionists eligible to apply for the Texas WIC Dietetic Internship?

If the nutritionist is funded on a WIC budget, then a DSHS nutritionist who works in a DSHS region or DSHS Central Office is eligible to apply as long as they meet other admission criteria.

9. Will preference be given to local agencies that lack registered dietitians (RDs) ?

Lack of RDs in a WIC local agency is taken into consideration. However, this should not discourage WIC local agency directors who employ RDs from encouraging their nutritionists to apply for the Texas WIC DI. The Texas WIC DI is currently trying to increase the number of applicants. Although a WIC local agency may have one or more RDs on staff, there may be a need for additional RDs because of the large number of clinics that still may be left unserved by an RD.

10. What are the selection criteria?

The American Dietetic Association has a standard application form for dietetic interns, and a number of the selection criteria are based on the information given in that application form, e.g., cumulative grade point average, grade point average in Didactic Program in Dietetics coursework, scholarships and honors received, work experience, volunteer activities related to dietetics, and letters of recommendation. Some of the other factors include a demonstrated need for RDs in a WIC local agency, letter from applicant, and the WIC local agency director's/DSHS Unit Manager's plans to utilize the advanced practice skills of the nutritionist upon completion of the internship.

11. Can a nutritionist apply for the Texas WIC DI if they have a Plan IV Verification Statement from an undergraduate program in dietetics?

No. Dietetic internships can only enroll individuals with a verification statement indicating completion of a Didactic Program in Dietetics. Individuals who have completed Plan IV and wish to become Registered Dietitians should contact a university with a Didactic Program in Dietetics and have their transcripts reviewed. The Director of the Didactic Program in Dietetics will determine what academic coursework that individual will need to obtain a DPD verification statement. A nutritionist may try contacting the university he/she graduated from or a nearby university. A complete list of universities with Didactic Programs in Dietetics may be found at the website www.eatright.org.

12. Who is on the selection committee?

All of the applications will be screened and reviewed by an internship selection committee including:

- Manager, Nutrition Education/Clinic Services Unit
- Director, Texas WIC Dietetic Internship
- Texas WIC DI Coordinators
- DSHS Central Office Nutritionists
- DSHS Regional Nutritionists
- Preceptors from food service systems management, nutrition therapy, and community nutrition rotations

13. Will an interview be required of the applicants?

Telephone interviews may be conducted with applicants at the discretion of the selection committee.

14. Can a WIC nutritionist who has not yet completed all of the ADA-approved Didactics Program in Dietetics courses apply?

A nutritionist who will have completed all of the ADA-approved DPD coursework **before** the internship begins may apply. The *ADA Declaration of Intent to Complete Degree and/or CADE-Approved Minimum Academic Requirements* form must be completed and signed by the didactic program director and returned along with the application. The ADA Verification Statement showing completion of a Didactic Program in Dietetics must be turned in to the Texas WIC dietetic internship director before the internship begins.

15. Can interns complete their supervised learning experiences in their own communities?

When possible, supervised practice sites will be utilized in the area of the state where the intern is employed. Prospective interns are required to contact registered dietitians in their area to help identify those who would be willing to serve as preceptors. See *Texas WIC DI Potential Facilities and Preceptors* form. Most of the community nutrition supervised learning experiences can be accomplished within the intern's local WIC agency if there is a willing RD preceptor. If there is not an RD in the intern's LA, then a nearby LA with a willing RD may be sought. At least one week with the DSHS regional nutritionist or WIC Central Office will be required. There will be 7 weeks that the interns will be in Austin for seminars, supervised experiences in breastfeeding and special needs children and the major project presentations and graduation. Also interns will be required to attend the TDA annual meeting in the city that is scheduled. See *Texas WIC DI Calendar For 2008*.

16. How does an applicant identify potential preceptors and facilities?

Your WIC local agency director and/or a registered dietitian on staff can be very helpful in identifying potential preceptors. You may contact the Texas WIC DI Director for a list of preceptors and facilities that Texas WIC DI interns used in previous years. Also refer to the *Guidance for Contacting Potential Facilities and Preceptors and Completing the Potential Facilities and Preceptors Form* found in the *Texas DI Internship – Supplements to CDR Application*.

17. What is the expected role of the WIC preceptor?

The WIC preceptor will assist the intern in scheduling all supervised experiences and assignments within the WIC local agency and other community sites. The WIC preceptor must review assignments and complete evaluation forms for the intern indicating whether or not he/she met the expected competencies for the supervised learning experiences. The WIC preceptor does not have to be present at all times with the intern, but should be present at regular intervals in order to be able to evaluate the intern's performance. The WIC preceptor will also be asked to give feedback to the dietetic internship director in order to improve the quality of the internship.

18. Is there a minimum GPA requirement?

No, but preference will be given to applicants with a cumulative GPA of 2.7 or better on a 4.0 scale

19. Is participation in the internship an allowable WIC cost?

Yes, USDA has stated in a policy memorandum that federal WIC funds can be used to support the development and operation of a dietetic internship that is approved/accredited by the American Dietetic Association. Texas WIC Dietetic Interns will charge their time to WIC Nutrition Education, if they are receiving a salary while participating in the internship. Other expenses that the WIC local agency may pay the costs for include professional textbooks and travel to internship facilities.

20. Is the Texas WIC Dietetic Internship approved by the American Dietetic Association?

Yes, the Texas WIC DI is currently granted initial accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) of the American Dietetic Association, 120 S. Riverside Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606, (312) 899-0040, extension 5400.

21. If a WIC local agency does not pay the intern's salary during the time he/she is participating in the internship, is the intern still expected to sign a *Letter of Agreement* with the WIC local agency specifying a work obligation and financial payback if failing to complete the work obligation?

Yes. The intern is still receiving substantial benefits by participating in the Texas WIC DI even if he/she has to take leave without pay. Most dietetic internships have significant tuition costs and few internships allow the intern to remain employed while completing an internship. Although each local agency can specify the terms of the contract (*Letter of Agreement*) with his/her employee, we have listed recommendations in the *Prospective Student Brochure*. The intern's salary is just a portion of the total costs of administering the Texas WIC DI. Because there is a significant financial investment that WIC Central Office is making with the internship, a good return on the investment is expected, e.g., registered dietitians providing high-risk nutrition counseling services in local agencies that previously had few or no RDs on staff. For a sample *Letter of Agreement*, please contact the Texas WIC DI Director. The DI Director can also provide a list of WIC local agencies that have had an intern in the DSHS DI in past years. These WIC Directors may be able to answer administrative questions that are common to other WIC local agencies.

22. Can an applicant apply more than one time to the Texas WIC DI?

Yes

23. Once an applicant is accepted into the Texas WIC DI, is there any preparation before the internship begins?

Yes, interns will be expected to satisfactorily complete assigned self-study modules and case studies on topics in food and nutrition prior to the internship and supervised experiences.

24. How should letters of recommendation and official transcripts be submitted with the application?

All letters of recommendation should be sent along with the application. We suggest applicants send a self-addressed stamped envelope to each individual from which you are requesting a letter of recommendation. They can then return these to the applicant, who should include them in the application packet. Official college transcripts should be sent to the applicant and the applicant should place them in the application packet.

25. What is a DPD verification statement and where do you get one?

A Didactic Program in Dietetic (DPD) Verification form is the method used by the American Dietetic Association to ensure that the required academic preparation has been obtained by the individual. This form **must** be submitted by the applicant with the *Dietetic Internship Program Application*.

Individuals who have graduated from an ADA-approved DPD program should have received copies of the Verification Statements indicating they have completed a DPD program at or near the time of graduation from their undergraduate university.

To obtain a copy of your *DPD Verification Statement*, contact the DPD Director of the University where you received your degree. If you do not know how to contact the DPD director of your university, please refer to the website:

http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/career_2192_ENU_HTML.htm.