



Career Services

From Suit Coat To White Coat

Ethics & Professionalism in the Workplace

Conducting yourself in the utmost professional manner is a great way to get ahead while in a practice experience setting. Treat this time as an opportunity to hone your professional skills by gaining valuable experience in the following:

Attitude – Remember that you are an ambassador of the University of North Texas Health Science Center. At all times, do your best to present yourself and the institution in the best possible light. Many times, a positive attitude can make up for deficiencies in other areas, so be sure to put your best foot forward whenever possible. This is your chance to make a positive impression on the organization and to gain valuable skills necessary for success in the workplace. Make the most of every learning opportunity and be cordial and friendly with everyone you meet!

Communication – Depending on the layout of the site, you may or may not have your own workspace. Remember to respect others' privacy by not asking about a coworker's age, relationship status, sexual orientation, politics, religion or health unless they offer the information first. Likewise, respect others by keeping your voice down when talking, as well as controlling your phone and/or computer volume. Be sure to turn off your cell phone or PDA when in the workplace.

Dress – Be sure to follow the dress code of the office, if stated. If there isn't a set standard, observe what others wear and dress accordingly. A good rule of thumb is to dress as if you already have the job you want to get, which means you should always dress in a presentable manner. Likewise, practicing good hygiene is essential, and limiting makeup and fragrances is important. Finally, be aware of your jewelry, your hairstyle and visible tattoos as these are all important aspects of your professional image.

Ethics – If you are faced with what you believe to be an ethical dilemma, be sure to address this with your site coordinator before making a decision. Likewise, be sure to talk about the issues with coworkers to get their advice. Be honest with yourself in what you are prepared to do. Remember, at no time should you be expected to engage in any illegal activity. Your actions and those of the organization should promote learning and a positive experience at all times. Again, don't be afraid to ask questions with your site coordinator or others within the organization and also with University of North Texas Health Science Center representatives if needed.

Networking – Your practice experience is meant to be a primer for finding a position upon graduation. Learning about the organization is important, but so is learning from the professionals you will be

working with. Take time to get to know them by learning what they do and make your presence known by asking pertinent questions, getting involved in projects and over-delivering on assignments. Be sure to follow up with contacts internally and externally even if they can't immediately help you. Remember, networking is a two-way street – being helpful to others can pay dividends for you in the long run.

Preparedness – Just as you would not want to be unprepared for a class, you do not want to under-perform on your site. Be mindful of deadlines and absolutely deliver on all promises. If asked to conduct research, work on a project or give a presentation, take on these assignments happily. Be sure to communicate progress and any difficulties with your site coordinator or the appropriate person. Remember that you are at the site to learn, so arrive ready to work without distraction. And don't be afraid to ask plenty of questions. Expect to learn about the organization and the industry and be able to speak intelligently when asked.

Sexual Harassment & Relationships – Workplace relationships are generally subject to strict guidelines. Be sure to adhere to company policies should you enter into a relationship with a coworker. Should that or any work relationship cross certain boundaries, it may be considered sexual harassment. There are two types – quid pro quo and hostile work environment. Quid pro quo means “something for something”, which refers to an employee performing sexual favors in return for a promotion or preferential treatment. Hostile work environment entails a coworker feeling uncomfortable about another's actions, including touching, flirting or inappropriate comments or materials. Sexual harassment is against the law and is taken very seriously. If you have questions regarding what is and isn't acceptable behavior, don't be shy in asking your site coordinator for direction.

Timeliness – Since you will be traveling to your site, plan to arrive early each day. Plan accordingly if you will be using public transportation, and be sure to factor in time to and from your parking site if you will be parking on site. You will be asked to set a schedule with your site coordinator, so be sure to discuss any tests or any conflicts early on. Never leave your assignment before the end of your schedule unless previously approved by your site coordinator. Communicate with your site coordinator as soon as possible if absent and be sure to discuss alternatives to make up any time missed.

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Texas Woman's University (2007). Orientation Leader Training Manual.



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