

Preceptor Letter

Description: This is an example of a letter that may be sent from the State Training Coordinator (STC) to a preceptor or from one preceptor to another (with modifications). It is meant to provide continuity and consistency for the new surveyor's learning experience. The STC will use this letter and the skills checklist to introduce the new surveyor to the preceptor and provide information regarding the new surveyor's current progress.

The letter reads as follows:

Dear Preceptor,

Your willingness to assist with (fill in the name)'s orientation is greatly appreciated. Your knowledge and expertise are essential tools in developing new staff into successful surveyors. Training can be rewarding and frustrating, especially when you have survey assignments as well. Your expertise assists with putting the "final" touches on the learning experience.

Skills Checklist

Enclosed is a copy of the skills checklist your new surveyor will have with him or her to assist with keeping track of what survey skills he or she has completed. Other documents included are information on the preceptor role, surveyor orientation, and surveyor evaluation forms.

Facilitating Learning

Here are some basic principles:

- Always make sure the new surveyor can tell you what regulation he or she thinks will be used for evaluating compliance. If the new surveyor has difficulty with identifying the correct regulation, he/she should review the regulation along with the appropriate interpretive guidelines and survey protocol.
- Before performing a task, reinforce the need to review the process before performing it. Evaluate the use of correct survey protocol and/or forms, observations, documentation, interviews, and evaluation skills. Stress the three sources of information to make a strong finding.
- Adult learners learn best by discovering the information themselves. Try saying, "Tell me what you saw or thought about that situation." If the new surveyor watched you complete an interview, ask him or her to tell you what he or she noticed about your questions, e.g., open-ended, probing, clarifying, voice tone, and nonverbal behavior.
- When the new surveyor is ready to investigate a focused area, have him or her verbalize his or her plans to determine compliance: which regulations, state rules, and documents to review; observations; and what questions to ask. Develop an initial investigation plan.
- When the new surveyor has a finding, which he or she feels is a problem, ask him or her to verbalize it and then question his or her rationale. Why is it a problem? How did you determine it was a problem (the facts and data sources used)? How is this evidence of noncompliance with a regulatory requirement? Was something done that conflicts with the regulation? Was something not done that is required under the regulation? If he or she has a question that can be answered by looking at a regulatory source, have him or her find it rather than providing the source. This encourages the new surveyor to get to know the regulations, state rules, and protocols.

Preceptor Letter

Record review can be difficult to master, especially if the new surveyor is not familiar with the process. Initially, review the format of a chart with (new surveyor's name) and have him or her go with you as you do observations and interviews. Discuss your findings.

Initially, have the new surveyor review one chart. Gradually add more reviews and tasks. This really depends on the individual's learning curve, willingness, and your time. This will be less stressful as the new surveyor begins writing deficiencies and using the Principles of Documentation (POD).

Review his or her documentation for completeness and, if citing a deficiency, he or she must have the supporting information documented. Please send in copies of (new surveyor's) deficiencies with the evaluation form.

Mentoring

Mentoring is difficult at times for people, as they want to be independent. Assure the new surveyor that close observation needs to occur until the team and the preceptor are confident in his or her abilities. Clarify upfront what you will be doing and your expectations for the new surveyor on this survey.

Suggested Training Plan: No matter what you plan, the new surveyor is responsible for reading the applicable regulations, guidance and survey protocols, reviewing any CMS-approved survey worksheets, and keeping you informed of his or her comfort level.

Week One: Assign one chart from your assignment. Complete your survey assignment with the new surveyor observing. Discuss DAILY how the investigation is going. Solicit questions about the process or the regulations from your new surveyor.

Week Two: Add a new task and chart review. Assess what and how he or she is feeling about the process.

Week Three: This is dependent upon how the new surveyor is assimilating information. Do not allow him or her to take on too much too fast. Use this time for repetitive tasks to build on investigation skills, critical thinking skills, and to see if he or she is assimilating information week-to-week. We do not expect him or her to be a fully functioning surveyor for a few months. Team leading will come later. Certainly talk to him or her about being a team leader and give tips along the way.

PLEASE always feel you can contact me to discuss any problems or questions.

Again, thank you for assisting in getting (new surveyor name) off to a good start.

Sincerely,

(Training Coordinator/Trainer Name/Preceptor Name)"