NC ACT Coalition

ACT Internship Hosting: Common Internship Standards

Building the Next Generation of Community Mental Health

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

ACT Team Hosting: Common Internship Standards

What Every ACT Team Need to Know to Host Student Interns

Published by the UNC Institute for Best Practices in partnership with the NC ACT Coalition

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INTRODUCTION

The NC ACT Coalition is building a statewide network of ACT teams that are ready and willing to host student interns from social work, counseling, psychology, and human services programs across North Carolina.

This guide explains what it means to be a **host site**, what hosting entities are encouraged to provide, and what schools and students will likely expect from you.

The goal is simple: **reduce the burden on ACT teams** by sharing common internship requirements so you do not have to figure out different standards for every school. Schools across NC helped develop this framework to ensure it meets their needs.

WHO THIS IS FOR

This guide is intended for:

- ACT Team Leaders and Program Directors considering hosting interns
- Supervisors who will work directly with student interns
- Agency administrators overseeing ACT programs

WHAT STUDENTS WILL BE PLACED WITH YOU

ACT teams in this network may host students from the following programs:

Student Type	Degree	Typical Hours Required
Social Work — Undergraduate	BSW	400 hours
Social Work — Graduate	MSW	450–500 hours per year
Counseling — Graduate	MA/MS	100 hours (practicum) or 600 hours (internship)

Student Type	Degree	Typical Hours Required
Psychology — Undergraduate	BA/BS	120–150 hours (varies by school)
Human Services — Undergraduate	BA/BS	120–150 hours (varies by school)

Good News: Each student's university will provide its own paperwork — including the affiliation agreement, learning contract, and evaluation forms. **You do not need to create those.**

SECTION 1: Common Standards that Hosting Programs Provide

Teams in our network share a common commitment to providing interns with the following core experiences.

1.1 SUPERVISION

This is the most important expectation from schools.

Typical supervisory expectations are as follows:

- **A designated supervisor** who is responsible for the intern for the duration of the placement
- **A minimum of one hour per week of individual supervision** with the intern - this means a scheduled, protected meeting focused on the intern's learning and professional development
- **A backup supervisor** who can cover if the primary supervisor is unavailable for an extended period
- **Timely completion of any evaluation or progress forms** provided by the student's university — these will vary by school but typically occur at midterm and at the end of the placement
- **Direct communication with the university's field/internship coordinator** if concerns arise about the student's performance, safety, or well-being

What supervision should look like: Supervision is not just checking in informally in the hallway. It is a dedicated time where you and the intern:

- Review their cases and client contacts
- Discuss clinical and professional questions
- Address any challenges or concerns

- Connect their experiences to their learning goals
- Give and receive feedback

1.2 SUPERVISOR QUALIFICATIONS

The person designated as the intern's supervisor (on your team or in your agency) is typically expected to meet the following minimum qualifications:

Intern Level	Supervisor Minimum Qualification
MSW student	MSW degree; minimum 2 years post-degree experience; LCSW or LCSWA preferred
BSW student	BSW or MSW degree; minimum 2 years experience
MA Counseling student	Graduate degree in counseling or related field; relevant licensure (LCMHC, LCMHCA, LCSW, or equivalent); minimum 2 years experience
BA Psychology / Human Services	Bachelor's degree minimum; master's degree preferred; 2 years relevant experience

Note: If your team does not currently have a staff member who meets these qualifications, it is possible to have a different agency staff member provide supervision.

1.3 LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Interns placed with ACT teams should have access to meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. Consider making the following available to every intern (please note this is not a comprehensive list, simply a starting point:

Core experiences (all interns):

- Participation in **regular team meetings**
- **Community visits** with team members — initially as an observer, with increasing responsibility over time as appropriate to their level
- Exposure to **treatment planning and goal development** with clients
- Opportunity to observe and learn **clinical documentation** practices
- Introduction to the **ACT model** and its evidence base — what makes ACT different from other approaches
- Exposure to the **multidisciplinary team structure** — shadowing different roles (psychiatry, nursing, peer support, etc.)

- Observation or participation in **crisis assessment and response** (with supervision; undergraduate students observe only)

Graduate-level interns additionally:

- Opportunity to build an **independent caseload** (small, supervised) over the course of the placement
- Opportunity to **lead or co-lead** contacts with clients
- Participation in **treatment plan authoring or revision**
- Supervised experience with **risk assessment**

You do not need to provide all of these on Day 1. Learning experiences should **build progressively** over the placement, starting with observation and increasing in responsibility as the student demonstrates readiness.

1.4 ORIENTATION

During the first one to two weeks of the placement, it is helpful to orient the intern to:

- Your agency's **policies and procedures**
- **HIPAA and confidentiality** requirements — the intern must sign a confidentiality agreement
- **Safety protocols** for community visits
- The **electronic health record** system (view access, and documentation access as appropriate)
- The **population your team serves** — common diagnoses, backgrounds, and needs
- **Mandated reporter** responsibilities
- Who to contact in an **emergency**
- The team's **schedule and expectations** for intern attendance

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1.5 PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Modeling a professional, healthy work environment is important. Be sure to:

- Treat interns as **emerging professionals**, not volunteers or extra labor
- **Never use interns as substitutes for paid staff** — their primary purpose is learning, not filling gaps in your workforce

- Ensure interns only provide services **within their scope of training** and with appropriate supervision
- Address any concerns about intern conduct **promptly and directly** — and loop in the university coordinator when needed

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SECTION 2: WHAT THE UNIVERSITY TYPICALLY HANDLES

Generally speaking, the following represents which entity is typically responsible for:

Responsibility	Who Handles It
Affiliation/site agreement	University and Agency
Supervision Orientation	University and Supervisor
Learning contract/goals document	University provides template; you and the student complete it together
Evaluation forms	University provides; you complete and return
Liability insurance for the student	University
Group supervision (counseling students)	University
Tracking student academic progress	University
Verifying hours	You and the student together; university reviews

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SECTION 3: WHAT THE NC ACT COALITION WILL PROVIDE TO YOU

As a member of the hosting network, the NC ACT Coalition will:

- **List your team** on the NC ACT Coalition internship directory, making you visible to field coordinators across the state
- **Communicate** with clinical coordinators regarding the benefit of an ACT internship.
- Create **promotional materials** to share in classrooms
- Share **resources about the ACT model** you can use with your interns
- The NC ACT Coalition serves as a **linkage point** — connecting students and universities with ACT teams across North Carolina. The relationship is between the student, the team, and the university. The Coalition does not supervise interns, mediate disputes, enforce

hosting requirements, or serve as a go-between for day-to-day placement issues. Those responsibilities belong to the university and the hosting team — just as they always have.

SECTION 4: MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS TO JOIN THE NETWORK

To be listed in the NC ACT Coalition internship directory, your team must meet the following:

Program Expectations:

- Be a member in good standing with the NC ACT Coalition
- Operating with a minimum score of 3.0 on the most recent TMACT review
- Maintaining a **minimum active caseload** sufficient to provide meaningful intern exposure (generally 30+ active clients).

Supervision Expectations:

- At least one staff member who meets the **supervisor qualifications** listed in Section 1.2
- Commitment to provide a **minimum of 1 hour/week of individual supervision**
- Willingness to **complete evaluation forms** on university timelines

Administrative Expectations:

- Willingness to execute **affiliation agreements** with universities
- Designated point of contact for **university coordinators**

SECTION 5: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why should our team host interns?

Hosting student interns is one of the most effective ways an ACT team can invest in the future of the behavioral health workforce in North Carolina. Practical benefits include:

- Building your **talent pipeline** — many interns go on to become paid staff
- Bringing **fresh perspectives and energy** to your team
- Supporting your team's **professional development** — supervising students is a growth experience for your staff
- Demonstrating your team's **commitment to the field** and to the ACT model
- Contributing to **workforce development** at a time when behavioral health is facing a significant staffing shortage

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Q: What exactly are we agreeing to if we join the network?

By joining the NC ACT Coalition Internship Network, your team is able to provide/complete:

- Provide a **qualified designated supervisor** and a backup
- Provide a **minimum of one hour per week** of individual supervision per intern
- Give interns access to **meaningful learning experiences** — community visits, team meetings, treatment planning, and documentation
- **Orient interns** during their first one to two weeks
- **Complete evaluation forms** provided by the student's university at midterm and end of placement
- Maintain **HIPAA compliance** and a safe, professional environment
- **Communicate promptly** with university coordinators if concerns arise

You will not be asked to create your own paperwork, develop your own evaluation tools, or manage accreditation requirements. The schools handle that.

Q: How much time will this actually take?

The primary commitment is **one hour per week of individual supervision** per intern. Beyond that, you will spend some additional time orienting the intern at the start, co-signing documentation, attending to any concerns that arise, and completing evaluation forms at midterm and end of placement. Many supervisors find that once an intern is oriented — usually by weeks four or five — they begin to add capacity to the team rather than draw from it.

Q: Do we have to take interns from every school that contacts us?

No. Being listed in the directory means schools and students can reach out to you, but you decide whether and when to accept a placement based on your team's current capacity. You can also indicate on your listing which student levels you are willing to accept and how many interns you can host at one time.

Q: What if we can only host one student at a time, or only certain times of year?

That is completely fine. Your directory listing will reflect your capacity and preferred placement terms — whether that is one student per semester, graduate students only, spring placements only, or anything else. You are in control of what you commit to.

Q: Does our supervisor need special training to work with interns?

No. However, most schools will require the supervisor to attend a brief supervisor orientation or training. This typically covers what schools expect, how to structure supervision effectively, and how to handle common challenges. We also provide ongoing consultation if questions come up.

Q: What if our supervisor leaves or is unavailable?

If your primary supervisor leaves mid-placement, notify the student's university field coordinator immediately. Work together to either transition the student to the backup supervisor or, if that is not possible, to find an alternative arrangement. The student's university will help manage this process — you will not be left to handle it alone.

Q: What paperwork do we have to do?

Less than you might expect. Each university will provide its own affiliation agreement, learning contract template, and evaluation forms. Your responsibilities are to:

- Sign the affiliation agreement with the university
- Work with the student to complete the **learning contract** (the university provides the template)
- Complete the **midterm and final evaluation forms** (the university provides these)
- Sign off on the **student's hours log** regularly

You do not need to create any of these documents yourself.

Q: Do we have to pay interns?

In most cases, no. Field placements and internships at these academic levels are typically unpaid as part of the student's program requirements. However, if your agency wishes to offer a stipend or hourly pay, that is allowed — it is a conversation between you, the student, and the university.

Q: What if an intern is not performing well or there is a serious concern?

Contact the student's university field or internship coordinator as soon as a concern arises — do not wait until the formal evaluation. Universities expect to hear from you early and will work with you to develop a plan. You will not be asked to manage a performance issue alone. Document your concerns and any conversations with the student. If a situation involves safety — for the student, client, or anyone else — follow your agency's safety protocols and notify the university immediately.

Q: Can we remove a student from our site if necessary?

Yes. If a student's conduct, performance, or behavior creates a safety concern or is seriously inconsistent with professional standards, you have the right to end the placement. Notify the university coordinator

immediately if this becomes necessary. This is a rare situation, and you should reach out to the university coordinator if you are unsure how to proceed.

Q: We already host interns from one school. Do we need to do anything differently?

Probably not much. Our hosting standards are designed to align with what most schools already require. Review the **NC ACT Coalition Hosting Standards Guide** to confirm your current practices are consistent. If they are, registering for the directory simply makes your team more visible to more schools across the state — potentially expanding your pool of applicants.

Q: How do we sign up?

Complete the **NC ACT Coalition Internship Network Registration Form**. Once your registration is reviewed, your team will be added to the directory.

Q: What if we want to be removed from the directory?

Contact us at any time at Chris_Fournier@med.unc.edu and we will remove your listing. We only ask that you honor any placements already in progress.