



Co-signing Student and Intern Documentation

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Several RDs have contacted the College asking if they must co-sign student and intern documentation. In many cases, employers are developing a co-signature policy and would like to know if the College has an official position on this matter.

The College does not require RDs to co-sign documentation in a health record that has been completed by nutrition students or dietetic interns. This decision is an organizational one. It is up to the work setting, internship program, academic institution or other organization where the students or interns being trained to develop these policies.

LOOK FOR ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

RDs should consult with their organization to see if there are any policies in place that address student or intern co-signature requirements. For risk management purposes, some organizations require that nutrition students and dietetic interns must always have their records co-signed by an RD. Others have policies that specify when a co-signature is needed and when it is not.

The reasons for co-signature should be clear and documented in policy. Reasons could be to confirm teaching, to denote that the service has been reviewed, or to verify that the information in the note is correct and that the RD agrees with its content. This can help with establishing accountability for record-keeping of all parties involved.

WHAT ABOUT PUBLIC HOSPITALS?

If a student or intern is documenting a diet order or other treatment under a medical directive in a public hospital, the facility would need to determine whether this is permitted

and whether this order for treatment may be implemented with or without an RD's co-signature.

STUDENTS AND INTERNS SHOULD HAVE THEIR OWN USER NAMES AND PASSWORDS TO ACCESS HEALTH RECORDS

Any student or intern documenting in an electronic medical record should have a unique user ID and password to log into client health records. This ensures that anyone making a notation in a record can be tracked. It also protects the privacy and security of clients because when the students and interns leave, access to client health records can be denied by deleting their user name and passwords. RDs can consult with their IT department and other health care providers in their facility to establish best practices in co-signing electronic documentation in a consistent manner.



MAKE SURE THE STUDENT OR INTERN IS COMPETENT

Provision 17 of the College's *Professional Misconduct Regulation* says that it is professional misconduct to assign dietetic functions to anyone who is not competent to perform those functions. Any organizational policy requiring RD co-signatures should address the competence of the students and interns before they can be asked to perform client care or staff relief and document independently.