

Action Plan Best Practices

NPTC has compiled the following tips for writing an Action Plan to help ensure that the plan is a meaningful tool for addressing concerns that are related to things not necessarily within the interns' control (being behind in hours) and/or not directly related to intern performance.

Language

In general, try to use language that has a primary focus on the site's responsibilities as appropriate. Interns who view their Action Plan as a way to prevent falling further behind in hours, rather than undue punishment or criticism, are more likely to benefit from the plan. Promoting the plan as a way to support the intern with their graduation requirements will help to ensure the intern has buy-in to the growth-based plan. You may also want to avoid frequently referring to the intern by their first name in the Action Plan as this might feel like accusatory language to the intern. Refer to them as “the intern” or “the trainee” instead.

Setting achievable goals

The intention of this plan is to determine the effectiveness of the steps put in place to remedy the concerns on a short-term basis. These areas include, but are not limited to, hour deficits that need to be addressed by the site. When offering an expectation for an acceptable performance, it is important to provide specific goals the intern can reasonably attain. (Think SMART goals, i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely.) For example, in the case of hour deficits, both the intern and supervisor may decide to review the intern's schedule on a regular basis to ensure that entries are input correctly.

Helping the intern meet the goals

Include any action steps that supervisors or other staff members will take to help the intern meet the goals of the Action Plan. If an intern is behind on Client Contact, for instance, a supervisor might do as much as possible to help build the intern's caseload so that the intern's schedule is full each week. List any additional resources available to interns that might help them attain appropriate hours. Remember that an action plan is a collaborative process and supervisors have the responsibility to ensure optimal training opportunities and resources in order for interns to meet their Action Plan goals.

Measuring acceptable performance

Explain how the intern will know if they are making progress toward meeting the goal of the Action Plan. Tell the intern when the plan will be evaluated and what will be measured at the evaluation meeting. If a shortage of Client Contact is the concern, for example, tell the intern that one of their responsibilities is to shadow providers during any free time to increase hours. Set clear next-steps if the initial goals are not met at the evaluation meeting.

Finalizing the Action Plan

The formal oversight of the plan, including formal updates submitted to NPTC, can be removed once the plan is established as effective (i.e., the intern is no longer falling **further** behind on hours at each audit). It is best to review the Action Plan with the intern in an evaluation meeting every three-weeks to one-month until the intern is no longer on the plan.