Development of a Practicum Site Quality Profile for Long Term Care Administration Programs

Overview. Anyone preparing to become a long term care administrator must complete an applied field experience (or “Practicum”) prior to being licensed. Although there is a limited body of research that suggests the Practicum experience has a strong influence on future success, there is no established mechanism identifying what characteristics are associated with a quality practicum site, which will provide the best training and education for future administrators. This project seeks to establish a profile tool which will capture critical variables associated with quality sites, across 4 major domains: The Learning Environment, Preceptor Characteristics, Organizational Performance Factors, and Site Characteristics.

Methodology. Students have been involved in nearly all aspects of this project, including literature searches, capturing feedback from relevant stakeholders, establishing expert panels, setting up Qualtrics surveys and extracting the data, identifying critical variables from the literature and stakeholder groups, brainstorming appropriate measures of these factors, working with our own Health Care Administration Program to implement procedural and website changes as we attempt to incorporate what we are learning as the project progresses - in real time, and in the future they will continue to play an active role in finalizing the development of the tool, and disseminating results through presentations and papers, and other applied venues.

Significance. This project increases the field’s ability to better define what the profile of a quality Practicum experience looks like. This tool will allow us the ability to develop research and report on factors that comprise a set of benchmarking features for quality. This tool can be useful in the selection of the highest quality sites and/or in less than ideal circumstances to help the trainee better understand the challenges they are facing, to maximize their experience and achieve competency in the skill sets necessary for a successful long term care administrator. This will be of value to our program, students, and the community partners who serve as practicum sites as well as all other colleges and universities that have long term care administration programs, as well as corporations and state licensing boards across the country, who are also seeking strategies to best prepare future long term care administrators.

This project was funded by an external grant, from the Commonwealth Fund.