



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

South Carolina Board of

Long Term Health Care Administrators

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NURSING HOME ADMINISTRATOR-IN-TRAINING (AIT) INTERNSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES

AIT Internship Program is not a required program. The program is an alternative option to the work experience requirements outlined in S.C. Code of Law §40-35-40(A).

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PURPOSE

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Board of Long Term Health Care Administrators (LTHCA) has developed an Administrator-In-Training (AIT) Internship program, effective July 1, 1998. The AIT Internship Program is not a required program. This program is intended to provide a flexible, work-based training program for interested and qualified persons to become licensed as a Nursing Home Administrators (NHA). The South Carolina General Assembly approved the NHA program in May 1997, as an effort toward satisfying the growing demand for qualified administrators. Successful completion of the AIT program satisfies the work experience required in S.C. Code §40-35-40(B) and enables the AIT Participant to apply for licensure as a NHA administrator.

AIT PARTICIPANT

AIT PREREQUISITES

Prior to enrolling in the AIT Program, the candidate must have earned a degree from an accredited college or university or must be enrolled in a course of study that will award such a degree on completion.

AIT PROGRAM LENGTH

For Nursing Home AIT candidates:

- with a baccalaureate or higher degree in health care administration or health care degree, the duration of the internship shall be for six (6) months;
- with a non-health care administration baccalaureate degree, the duration of the internship shall be for nine (9) months.

AIT ENROLLMENT

The AIT candidate must register with the Board of Long Term Health Care Administrators (LTHCA) by submitting a completed **Administrator-In-Training Application** and payment of the non-refundable, application fee of \$25.00.

Upon approval, the Board will issue an AIT training permit to the applicant, **valid for up to one year**. The AIT participant is at that time responsible for securing a Preceptor from the Board-approved Preceptor Directory. A completed **AIT/Preceptor Agreement** must be submitted and approved by the Board prior to application approval and commencement of the AIT internship.

AIT RESTRICTIONS

The Board of LTHCA prohibits AIT participants from training at multiple facilities. Additionally, AIT participants may not be employed in any other capacity in the facility where the AIT training program is being executed.

An AIT participant who maintains outside employment during the AIT program must divulge this information to the Board of LTHCA as well as the preceptor, prior to beginning the program.

AIT PRECEPTOR

PRECEPTOR REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for becoming a preceptor in the AIT program are as follows:

- Submission of a completed Preceptor application
- Must be currently licensed as a South Carolina Nursing Home Administrator
- No disciplinary sanctions against the license
- Shall have been employed as a licensed administrator in a DHEC facility licensed for a time period of three(3) years prior to application date for Nursing Home Administrators

PRECEPTOR ENROLLMENT

Qualified preceptors must submit a completed **Administrator-In-Training Preceptor Application** to the Board of LTHCA. Following Board approval, the preceptor must complete the online AIT Preceptor Training through the National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards (NAB). This training is available to preceptors at no charge and continuing education credits will be awarded upon completion. The **National AIT Program Manual** (AIT Manual) is available for download on NAB's website (www.nabweb.org).

Successful completion of the preceptor training results in the preceptor's name, facility name and address, and business telephone number being included on the AIT Preceptor Directory available to all AIT candidates.

Preceptors who successfully complete the initial training program will receive a certificate valid for three years. A preceptor refresher course is required after the initial three-year period and every five years thereafter. The refresher course will be similar to the initial training and continuing education credits will be conferred upon completion. The Board of LTHCA may, for good cause, refuse to approve initially or renew a preceptor.

PRECEPTOR RESTRICTIONS

The Board of LTHCA restricts preceptors from training an employer or supervisor in the AIT program. In addition, preceptors may supervise no more than two AIT participants concurrently.

PRECEPTOR CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS

Preceptors may obtain CE hours upon the completion of an AIT program. CE hours are awarded based upon the AIT program length, a preceptor will receive:

- Seven (7) CE hours for a six (6) month AIT program
- Ten (10) CE hours for a nine (9) month AIT program

AIT PROGRAM

RECORD KEEPING

All applications, reports, letters, or other correspondence related to the AIT program become part of the permanent record with the Board of LTHCA, for both AIT participants and preceptors.

PROGRAM CONTENT

The AIT Program is structured in accordance with the NAB and the American College of Health Care Administrators. The specifics of which are delineated in **AIT Manual**.

The AIT participant should evaluate their background and experience by completing the *Self-Assessment Instrument* found in the **AIT Manual**. This self-assessment is not to be submitted to the Board of LTHCA. Instead, it is to be used to determine the time to be spent in each of the Domains of Practice and is a useful tool for identifying specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment covers five domains: Customer Care, Support and Services; Human Resources; Finance; Environment; and Leadership and Management.

Prior to the AIT internship commencement, the AIT participant and Preceptor must submit a completed Agreement which includes program proposal. The AIT program should train participants in all areas of administration:

1. Administration
2. Human Resources
3. Nursing/Health Care Services
4. Rehabilitation
5. Medical/Residential Records
6. Activities
7. Social Services/Admissions
8. Business Office
9. Dietary
10. Housekeeping/Laundry
11. Maintenance/Environmental Management

Any “other” experiences, such as conferences, training seminars, court hearings or other related events require Board approval prior to AIT attendance and may be submitted to the Board of LTHCA at any time during the AIT program.

In addition to the required time to be spent in each department, opportunities exist for the AIT to complete “special projects” throughout the AIT program. The **AIT Manual** lists several of activities at the end of each *Domain of Practice* section, or, AIT participants and preceptors may wish to develop a project not in the **AIT Manual**. All selected projects must be submitted to the Board for approval, prior to implementation.

PROGRAM ENTRY DATES

The Board of LTHCA will approve AIT programs to start monthly. Completed applications must be received no later than the 15th of the month preceding the planned starting month. Applications received after the 15th will not be eligible to begin until the beginning of the following month. (Example: Agreement received on August 20th, if approved, will result in the AIT program starting on October 1).

No AIT program may begin until the Board of LTHCA issues official notice of approval of the AIT participant, preceptor and selected program. The Board reserves the right to approve or reject the program proposed and may or may not recommend changes needed for Board approval.

PROGRESS REPORTS

The Board of LTHCA or designee, requires continual tracking of AIT program progress. This is accomplished through the **AIT Monthly Report Packet**. A completed report, by the preceptor, is to be submitted to the Board of LTHCA no later than the 5th of each month. In addition to the monthly report, the preceptor will meet with the AIT participant at least weekly throughout the program. It is expected that the preceptor will utilize these meetings to notify the AIT of his performance as the program progresses. If at any time during the AIT program the AITs performance is unacceptable, the preceptor will advise the AIT and the AIT will be afforded the opportunity to correct the deficiencies within a specified period of time. This information should be noted in the monthly reports, along with the plan of correction and the progress made toward improvement.

At the conclusion of the program, the **AIT Final Reports** are to be submitted within ten days of the AIT program completion. There are separate final reports to be completed by the AIT participant and preceptor.

All required documentation must be received by the Board for the AIT program to be complete. Failure to submit the documentation will result do so will result in the Board's denial to approve the completion of the AIT Program.

CHANGE OF PROGRAM

Any change in preceptor requires written notice and approval by the Board of LTHCA. An internship that is discontinued by a period of military service may be completed within a year after the service, with Board of LTHCA notification and approval. Discontinuance of training for any other reason must be reported to the Board of LTHCA and the AIT.

If an AIT program is discontinued without approval from the Board of LTHCA, the AIT training permit becomes invalid immediately. The AIT participant must then re-apply by completing another **Administrator-In-Training Application** and submitting it along with the non-refundable registration fee of \$25. The AIT Program may not be a viable option for some applicants, as such the applicable work experience in S.C. Code of Law §40-35-40(A) is required.

AIT PROGRAM COMPLETION

No AIT program will be considered complete until all reports are received, exit interviews conducted, and other program requirements met. Written notification of successful completion will be sent.

Completion of the AIT program does **not** guarantee approval to take the South Carolina or NAB Administrator Examinations. Completion of the AIT program requirements only satisfies the required work experience prior to applying for the exam. Information regarding the application process for both exams will be provided along with the written notification of successful completion of the AIT program.

AIT participants are expected to apply for a South Carolina Administrator License within one year of completion of the AIT program. A request for an extension of this time period may be submitted to the Board of LTHCA for hardship cases. Approval of a time extension will be at the discretion of the Board of LTHCA.

GENERAL INFORMATION

AIT PARTICIPANT ABSENCES

Absenteeism must be reported by the preceptor in the monthly reports, and may be cause for termination of the AIT program, if determined excessive by the Board of LTHCA. The preceptor and AIT participant must deal with absences that total less than 5 consecutive working days, and must rearrange the training accordingly. Any absences of 5 or more consecutive working days must be reported to the Board of LTHCA and a decision will be made regarding the future of the AIT program.

PRECEPTOR ABSENCES

The preceptor must spend an adequate and reasonable amount of time on the facility premises. As stated previously, weekly meetings between AIT participant and preceptor are expected. In the event that a preceptor is away from the facility more than 10 consecutive working days, the Board of LTHCA must be notified immediately. If the absence is planned, prior notification is required and the Board of LTHCA will resolve the issue. Cumulative preceptor absences in excess of 25 working days during AIT program, regardless of reason(s), must be reported to the Board of LTHCA and may result in program extension or suspension.

COMPENSATION OF AIT

The facility in which an AIT participant is training may compensate the AIT participant during the internship but is under no obligation to do so. Compensation issues should be discussed and resolved during the initial meeting between AIT participant and Preceptor, prior to implementing the program. The Board of LTHCA will in no way compensate the AIT participant for time spent in the AIT training program. Similarly, the facility providing the AIT training will determine the AIT's employment status, whether or not employee benefits are available, and any other employment related issues.

ORIENTATION/FACILITY POLICIES

It is expected that the facility in which the AIT participant is training will provide an orientation, the scope of which will be determined by the facility. The orientation session may be conducted one-to-one by the preceptor or other management staff, in a group setting with other new employees, or combination. Certain aspects should be covered as soon as possible, including a tour of the building(s) and property, introduction to supervisory personnel and other staff, and a general review of the facility policies. When introducing the AIT participant to facility personnel, the AIT participant's role and responsibilities should be clarified to the greatest extent possible, so as to facilitate cooperation in staff providing information and encouragement.

The AIT participant is obligated to comply with facility policies in the same manner as other employees. Therefore, the rules and regulations should be clearly delineated when the AIT participant initially arrives at AIT NHA Program Guidelines

the facility. Included should be information regarding the workspace allocated for the AIT participant, applicable personnel policies such as pre-employment screenings, confidentiality regulations and emergency procedures. The myriad of organization-specific topics should be addressed at this time as well.

Any action that would result in termination of an employee, according to facility policies, must also apply to an AIT participant. The causes for termination must be clearly defined and established in facility regulations, and should be discussed with the AIT participant during orientation. Termination of an AIT participant by a preceptor must be reported within 2 working days to the Board of LTHCA.

TERMINATION

In addition to the termination process listed above, the Board of LTHCA may terminate both preceptors and AIT participants from the AIT Program for just cause. Causes for termination include charges of any criminal activity related to the facility, preceptors loss of license or failure to renew license, facility's failure to renew license, and any attempt to intentionally misrepresent information to the Board of LTHCA.

In the event an AIT program is terminated by either the preceptor or the Board of LTHCA, the Board will determine if that AIT participant is eligible to begin a new AIT program with another preceptor. Additionally, the Board will determine if it is necessary to advise the new preceptor of the AIT participant's prior termination.

SCHEDULE

The AIT program will be conducted between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, on a regular basis for 8 (eight) hours per day. This does not preclude the AIT participants from working on weekends, holidays, or during different shifts for special events or unique situations that may arise.

The preceptor may suggest/request the AIT participant attend after-hours activities while offering the AIT participant the option of refusing. The Board of LTHCA strongly recommends that AIT participants attend facility events and activities whenever possible. Any time spent "after hours" at special events should be considered part of the AIT program time and coordinated appropriately by the preceptor and AIT participant. All preceptor requests for attendance at facility events and AIT participant responses should be included in the monthly reports to the Board.

During the course of the AIT program, the AIT participant must not be on-call during non-working hours and should not be expected to work in excess of 40 hours per week. In the event that an AIT participant does work more than 40 hours per week, the preceptor must determine the compensation for that time or if the excess time will be eliminated from the following week.

COMPLIANCE

AIT participants are expected to comply fully with all work-related requests and assignments from the preceptor or other facility employee(s) responsible for training the AIT participant. Failure to complete assigned tasks should be noted in the monthly reports and should be discussed during the weekly AIT participant-Preceptor meeting.

In the event that an assignment conflicts with the personal or religious beliefs of the AIT participant, the AIT participant should advise the preceptor of such and the preceptor and AIT participant are to seek a mutually agreeable resolution. If an agreement cannot be reached, the incident should be immediately reported in writing to the Board of LTHCA and a decision will be made.

SITE VISITS

At any time during the AIT Program, a member of the Board of LTHCA may conduct a site visit during regular working hours with prior notice, to monitor the progress of the AIT participant and the program. Along with Board-initiated visits, the Preceptor and/or AIT participant may request additional visits. The report(s) generated by these visits will become part of the permanent file with the Board of LTHCA for both the AIT participant and the Preceptor.

The frequency of site visits will vary. It is anticipated that 6-month programs will be visited a minimum of one time and 9-month programs a minimum of two visits.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Upon completion of the AIT program, AIT participants may be requested to meet with one or more members of the Board of LTHCA for an exit interview. These interviews will be requested at random, yet are a requirement for completion of the AIT program for those selected. As with all other reports, the summary of this interview will become part of the permanent file with the Board of LTHCA for both the AIT participant and the preceptor.

APPEALS AND GRIEVANCES

If at any time during the AIT program the AIT participant or preceptor is dissatisfied with any decision of the Board of LTHCA, a written request should be submitted to the Board for a personal conference. This conference may be with one or more members of the Board or its designee, or may be in the form of an address to the entire Board of LTHCA. Prior to approval of a meeting with the Board or its designee, every attempt will be made to resolve the issue without full Board intervention.

