

Policy on Site Visitor and Site Visit Chair Training

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) requires that all individuals who serve as evaluators on accreditation site visits to schools or programs of public health be well qualified to do so. Site visitors and site visit chairs must be well prepared to carry out the role of evaluator *and* to serve as a representative of the Council. Site visitors serve on a voluntary basis as CEPH representatives are selected based on an agreement to share their time, effort, and expertise.¹ Qualifications of site visitors are described in the *Accreditation Procedures*.

Site Visitor Training

CEPH is committed to designating highly qualified individuals to evaluate schools and programs. The initial training, as well as ongoing training and development of site visitors, is an agency priority. Thus, it is the policy of the Council that all site visitors must complete comprehensive training before initial service on a site visit team. After initial training, site visitors must demonstrate ongoing currency with CEPH policies, processes, and criteria interpretation in order to remain an active member of the pool of eligible site visitors.

The procedures manual specifies that the purpose of the training is “to ensure that site visitors are fully knowledgeable about CEPH accreditation policies, procedures and criteria, and are clear about their roles as agency representatives.” Training enhances the credibility of the site visit team in dealing with the constituents of the school or program; knowledgeable team members engender confidence that the team will be able to make fair and reasoned judgments about the manner in which the school or program meets the accreditation criteria. Training also increases the likelihood that site visit teams will apply accreditation criteria in the same manner across school and programs over time, thus contributing to the reliability of the criteria.

All individuals who serve as site visitors must receive initial training in one of the following ways:

1. Participation in an invitational group training program for new site visitors, or
2. One-on-one training and preparation by a CEPH staff member of comparable scope and depth to the group training programs.

The group training includes self-paced didactic modules, including assessments, and a live session capstone that includes case studies and small group exercises.

In order to demonstrate ongoing currency, all site visitors must complete ongoing training and relevant professional development within six months of a site visit assignment. CEPH staff offer brief, distance-based ongoing training opportunities at least twice annually and maintain asynchronous ongoing training opportunities, as well. In addition to the ongoing training obligation within six months of a site visit assignment, CEPH may require additional training as needed, e.g., when significant new policies or procedures are adopted.

In addition to the above training, the Council engages in other strategies to support and develop site visitors. These strategies include 1) distributing descriptive and instructive written materials in advance of a site visit; 2) assigning a professional staff member to accompany all teams in preparatory activities and on the site visit as visit coordinator to support the needs of the team; 3) scheduling a team conference call prior to the visit to allow team members to clarify assignments, procedures, processes, interpretation of criteria, etc.; 4) scheduling agenda time for executive sessions on all site visits, similar to the pre-visit conference call.; 5) regularly evaluating the performance of site visitors; 6) retraining site visitors on updated procedures, revised criteria, and other relevant topic areas as identified by the Council and staff;

¹ CEPH does not pay honoraria for the services of team members but does reimburse actual costs.

and 7) ensuring that site visitors are apprised of CEPH newsletters, annual reports, and social media outlets in which critical agency issues and updates are discussed.

Site Visit Chairs

Site visit chairs also serve on a voluntary basis as CEPH representatives and share their time, effort, and expertise. Site visit chairs are selected from the site visitor pool by staff and Councilors and are able to accept the responsibility or decline the promotion and remain a site visitor.

Site Visit Chair Qualifications

- Site visit team members who are recommended by their peers (including CEPH staff) after at least two site visits

AND

- Demonstrate ability to commit time to increased preparation before site visits (i.e., review and provide feedback on preliminary self-studies and review and provide feedback on site visit agendas);
- Demonstrate ability to meet timelines and deadlines;
- Show current working knowledge of and familiarity with CEPH criteria;
- Demonstrate ability to effectively apply CEPH accreditation criteria to a variety of institutions equitably;
- Show knowledge of CEPH policies, current practices, and procedures;
- Facilitate participation of other team members;
- Demonstrate ability to negotiate consensus among team members; and
- Demonstrate ability to present the team's findings and conclusions concisely and diplomatically during the exit briefing.

Site Visit Chair Training

All newly promoted site visit chairs must complete a one-hour site visit chair training, prior to the first site visit as team chair. This training describes the chair's role, defines the attributes of a chair, defines the tasks of the chair, and provides guidance on site visit management.

In addition to the above training, the Council engages in other strategies to support and develop site visit chairs. These strategies include all support, development, and re-training available to site visitors as well as additional training opportunities specific to issues pertaining to team leadership.

Council on Education for Public Health
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