



Selected Learnings from ACGME Site Visits – Addiction Medicine Fellowship Training Programs

In advance of the July 14, 2021, ACAAM Addiction Medicine Fellowship Town Hall - ACGME Site Visits, we asked those who had already had a site visit to share something they learned -- for example, things that were of particular interest to the site visitor, aspects of preparation for the site visit that proved particularly useful, and unexpected issues that surfaced during the visit. The responses from program directors and coordinators* are listed below.

Aspects of your preparation for the site visit that were most (or least) valuable

“One thing I did prior to our site visit was have a site visit prep session to review the curriculum and discuss anyone's questions. This was VERY helpful.”

“Make sure that everyone is on the same page when answering questions - they are looking for inconsistencies. It is ok to state you are not doing something, it looks worse if the PD says you are and the fellows say you are not.”

“There is a lot by way of policies and protocols (eg, duty hours, filing of grievances. . .) that fellows/faculty get early on, but that they may have forgotten. We thought it potentially helpful to reorient folks to some of these things, as well as orient them to the site visit. We required our faculty and fellows to attend a “site visit orientation” session (1 hour) 1-2 weeks before the site visit.”

“A pre-survey meeting may be a good idea to remind fellows and faculty how the program meets certain requirements.”

“It is helpful to prepare the faculty and fellows, so they accurately reflect what is happening. For example, they may not realize they had ‘wellness education’ or remember that they heard about the ‘fatigue mitigation policy’ in orientation.”

“Meet the deadlines on updating WebADS. I took that for granted but they truly do not print out updates/apps after the posted deadline.”

“Read through the ADS very carefully before submitting. The ADS update is for the current July-onward period of time, not since the start of the fellowship. Read through all documents carefully and look for minor typos.”

“People should note that simply using the block diagram templates from ACGME is not sufficient to tie it to the rotations and that they should probably add a second page of explanatory notes to the block diagram which take someone totally unfamiliar with the program from the block diagram to the actual rotations.”

“As the coordinator, I prepared printed binders with all the information that was updated in ADS and copies of the evaluations provided to the SV (site visitor) from New Innovations, along with the block schedule and documents that were requested by the SV via the One Drive folder. These binders were provided to all the faculty and fellows to use for accessing information during the site visit interview. I also found it very helpful to request that the SV copy me on all the Zoom invitations sent to the faculty

and fellows, because I was then able to track what was going on when and forward the invitation to interviewees that needed the link the day of the visit.”

“All reviewers can request documents in their own way. Some use One Drive, while others are happy with just PDF versions. Requested documents for policies, evaluations, and reviews will be in addition to what is included in WebAds.”

“If you have multiple training sites, there needs to be a faculty representative from each site participating in the site visit.”

“One positive thing I learned is that prior to the visit you can and should talk with the reviewer to make sure you are giving them the proper stuff in the format that they want. The pre-visit zoom call was really helpful for us.”

“I would also advise all coordinators to take copious notes during the interview. My notes proved to be invaluable in following up with our response to the SV’s questions and requests for clarification. I am now also able to use the notes on the areas for improvement suggested by the SV as a template for our next annual program evaluation committee meeting.”

Curricular or other program features that were of particular interest to the site visitor

“The site visitor spent A LOT of time with us on the program survey. Programs should spend a fair bit of time reviewing those results and strategizing plans for “weak points” on the survey.”

“Lots of interest in the entire evaluation process. Given small fellowship programs, how are the fellows evaluation of the faculty collected and presented to the faculty in such a way to maintain fellow anonymity.”

“They were very concerned about our process for Fellows evaluating the faculty and how this evaluation and feedback was delivered to the faculty.”

“One thing I think all the programs could benefit from is sharing resources in regard to evaluation forms.”

“She liked what we were doing for DEI in terms of recruitment and weaving it into the curriculum.”

“Diversity of population treated in the clinical environment, did the fellows receive a well-rounded clinical experience.”

“Lots of interest in quality improvement and/or patient safety projects performed by the fellows, and how those projects can be maintained and continued from one year to the next given these short 1-year fellowships.”

“The reviewer was interested in how we crafted the didactic curriculum and incorporated faculty (core and otherwise) into the sessions and the challenges we have had getting more faculty involvement in our didactic series. We had identified this as a challenge, and he actually had some good suggestions for how we could do that. He was also very interested in the specific clinical sites where our fellows train - had a lot of questions about the community sites and how we met specific clinical requirements using these community sites.”

“Questioned whether there was enough protected time dedicated for the fellowship for key faculty and whether time allocated to program by the Program Director was sufficient, was the PD available for discussion and questions with the fellows regularly.”

“ACGME expectations for faculty development with community preceptors. This is a result of specialty programs being required to list all rotation supervisors as Faculty. Our program utilizes multiple community partners for education. Did not have a mechanism to show faculty development of these more "peripheral" preceptors.”

“They were also concerned with how we are encouraging and tracking Faculty members participation in faculty development sessions/activities.”

“There was a lot of attention to how we are funded, which was surprising. And there was a frank suggestion that we should be compensating our faculty so they would be more motivated for participation in committees, faculty development, lecturing, etc. But no offer for money (obviously). I was asked directly about how much time I am funded for. ... There was a suggestion that I or another core faculty or associate training director be present at every lecture so I can ensure that the presentations are adequate.”

“Issues brought up regarding the use of NP’s as part of faculty. We have an NP on faculty (not providing supervision but helping with curriculum and evaluation) - this was not received well by our reviewer.”

Some surprises and takeaways

“We spent a fair amount of time having our fellows prepare information about their QI activities and their research activities and the reviewer did not seem to be interested in those. Perhaps he just read what we prepared and was OK with that. But he also did not ask any questions about their scholarly activities, and we had had them prepare something in case he focused on that.”

“I also was not really prepared to learn that I will not find out if we passed for 5 months. I'm sure we will have findings, and it feels really bad. It was nice to hear that seasoned training directors had findings and it is just something that is to be expected along the way.”

“We were told that the SV would submit her site visit report to the review committee, which will meet at the end of October 2021. During the October meeting, the committee will vote on our accreditation status/citations and our program will receive a brief email at this time and approximately 30-60 days later, we will receive a detailed letter with any areas for improvement, citations, commendations, etc.”

“I think the most important thing that I took away was that our site visitor was a partner in this process. She had reviewed everything and knew the program really well. During the visit, she helped us in areas where she felt we had not represented the program as strongly as we could have. It was really a very good experience.”

“I think we were surprised at how positive he was - we kind of expected that he would be trying to find issues that were problems and challenges, but he responded to those that we had identified and spent time discussing suggestions for how we might be able to address those challenges - in a very positive, helpful way. We found him generally feeling like these fellowships are needed and need to be supported - so I think he was coming at the review from that perspective.”

“I think the biggest takeaway is that our experience was vastly different from people who had a different field representative.”

“My understanding is that different site visitors may focus on different areas, so this is likely not a comprehensive listing of what others should expect, but it may offer some insight that could be valuable in helping other programs prepare for their site visits.”

Thank You

We gratefully acknowledge the following Addiction Medicine program directors and coordinators for their contributions to these learnings:

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