

Interprofessional Shadowing (video transcript)

Video location: https://youtu.be/0s_IORjfRx8

This video presents an overview of interprofessional shadowing, and is intended for students, preceptors, and practitioners. It may also be useful to the practitioners' managers, to provide context and information about the resources available to help plan the shadow experiences.

Interprofessional shadowing involves having a student from a particular profession observing and interacting with a practitioner, or potentially other students, from another profession. A shadow experience may be arranged within the context of a course, or a student may initiate it by contacting their preceptor.

The objectives of the shadowing experience depend on the student's current level of experience with interprofessional practice. For example, a novice learner is still developing their professional identity, learning about the role and scope of their future practice. So, for these students, the focus should be on exposing the student to different roles found in the care setting, including practitioners, staff, administrators, volunteers, patients, and others. These students will also benefit from observing the communication among practitioners and the patients, clients, and family members in the care setting.

Advanced learners have a better understanding of their professional role and the roles of others. They will benefit from a focus on applying collaboration skills in practice, and how to support *relationships* among patients, clients, and family members in the care setting. In all cases, it's important to remember that shadowing is not a passive activity. It should be planned with clear objectives to maximize the student's learning experience.

There are three parties involved in interprofessional shadowing. The *student* is the learner who wishes to participate in an interprofessional shadowing experience. The *preceptor* might go by a different title; this is the educator responsible for supervising the student in the community or clinical practicum. The *practitioner* might be a clinician, therapist, staff member, or any health and social care provider that the student is observing.

The student initiates the shadow by contacting their preceptor to discuss potential practitioners that they might observe. The preceptor makes the initial contact with the practitioner, but then typically hands off to the student to arrange the details. The student should be as flexible as possible to accommodate the practitioner's schedule. The shadow might last anywhere from 30 minutes to a full day, depending on the learning objectives and schedules. Once the arrangements are made, the student should research the profession that they will shadow. A good place to start is the website for that profession's regulatory body.

The student should review the *Student's Guide to Interprofessional Shadowing*. This is a lanyard card with observation tips and discussion prompts to help students get the most out of their shadowing experience. Finally, the student should send the practitioner the *Practitioner's Guide to Interprofessional Shadowing* so they can review it before the interaction. Both of these guides are available on VIPER, the Virtual Interprofessional Educator Resource, at this address: uab.ca/viper.

The preceptor reaches out to the practitioner to gauge their interest. Not everyone will be interested and able to take this on, so it may take a few tries to find a suitable practitioner. Once a practitioner is identified, the preceptor connects them with the student to schedule the interaction. The preceptor works with both the student and practitioner to define a clear purpose for the shadowing interaction.

The practitioner, once they agree to participate in the shadow and set a schedule for it, should think ahead to the interaction:

- Consider your own profession and the student's; can you arrange for the student to observe the two professions interacting in practice?
- Are there other professions that the student may benefit from observing?

The practitioner should also review the *Practitioner's Guide to Interprofessional Shadowing* before the interaction.

During the shadow, the student observes the practitioner as they interact with the care team, patients, and others in their environment. They use the prompts in the *Student Guide* as a starting point for asking questions. But the student should be mindful that asking questions at certain times may not be appropriate, such as when the practitioner is speaking to a patient, especially around sensitive topics. The student must also respect that, while their experience is important, the practitioner's priority is providing patient or client care first.

The preceptor should be familiar with the details of the *student placement agreement*, which governs the legal responsibilities of the student's educational institution and the practitioner's clinic or organization. The purpose of the agreement is to avoid risks to the student while on clinical and community placements. The preceptor should inform the student and practitioner of any relevant details.

During the shadow, the practitioner should orient the student to the work environment, including any safety information they should be aware of. The practitioner then allows the student to observe them and ask questions. If there are times that are not appropriate for questions, the practitioner should tell the student. For early learners in particular, don't assume that the student will know when to hold their questions. The practitioner then carries on with their work, letting the student observe their role in action, and how their profession interacts with others, especially the student's own profession.

At the end of the shadowing experience, the student should thank the practitioner for sharing their time and experience. It is also considerate to follow up with an email or card to say thank you again. The student should also reflect on their experience individually or with a preceptor, and potentially with other students. More on this later.

The preceptor should help the student to reflect on their experience. They should also reach out to the practitioner to ask how the shadow went from their perspective, and whether any changes are needed in order for them to participate again in the future.

After the shadow, the practitioner may use this opportunity to reflect on their own role in collaborative practice. If they feel comfortable doing so, they might share their thoughts with the student and preceptor. If they have feedback about the interaction, the practitioner should provide this to the preceptor, to help improve future shadowing interactions for all parties involved. The practitioner might also encourage their colleagues to participate in an interprofessional shadowing interaction.

As soon as possible after the shadowing interaction, but certainly within a few days, the student should reflect on their shadowing experience. This might take place as a one-on-one conversation with the preceptor, or a group discussion with other students who have completed shadows, or even a few minutes spent alone to think and write down their thoughts. This reflection is vital for the student to more deeply learn from their experience. Some reflection questions to consider are:

- What did you learn about the profession that surprised you?
- How could you see yourself working with this profession? How might your roles overlap?
- What further learning do you need to know or work on in order to work effectively with this profession?
- In what ways was participating in this interaction challenging? What aspects were easy? Why?
- How will you use your knowledge about other professions to build relationships on a new team?

The two *Interprofessional Shadowing Guides*, and a guide to support the reflection discussion, are available on VIPER, the Virtual Interprofessional Educator Resource, at this address: uab.ca/viper.

This presentation was created by the University of Alberta in partnership with the University of Texas at Austin. This has been an overview of interprofessional shadowing. Thank you for watching.

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