

# *SITE VISITOR'S* **SITE VISITOR'S**



# *HANDBOOK* **HANDBOOK**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
- II. Purpose of the Site Visit
- III. Before the Site Visit
  - A. CoA-NDT Self-Study Review
  - B. Site Visitor Self-Study Review
  - C. Site Visit Agenda
- IV. During the Site Visit
  - A. Opening Meeting
  - B. Data Collection
  - C. Closing Meeting
- V. After the Site Visit
- VI. Preparing the Site Visit Report
- VII. Summary of Team Responsibilities
  - A. Team Chair
  - B. Team Member
  - C. Both Team Members
- Appendix A Suggestions for Reviewing a Self-Study
- Appendix B Sample Site Visit Interview Questions
- Appendix C CoA-NDT Post Site Visit Questionnaire  
CAAHEP Accreditation Process Assessment
- Appendix D Characteristics of Successful Site Visitors  
Ten Commandments for the Site Visit Team

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The site visit is the most critical and complex aspect of the accreditation process. It is also the most visible function of the CoA-NDT. The CoA-NDT has the obligation to assure itself and the educational community it serves that those engaged in the site visit are fully qualified and competent.

The process of accreditation is almost totally contingent upon the performance of the site visit team. This team must collect, review, interpret, verify and document all information pertaining to the program accurately and reliably. The accreditation recommendation made by the CoA-NDT depends upon the accuracy of information gathered so it can reach a fair and responsible decision concerning the program.

It is for this reason that the following policies and procedures have been developed. It is the Committee's expectation that delineating the site visitors' responsibilities and skills will assist those already engaged in the process in discharging their responsibilities and will provide the basis for training new evaluators. Careful preparation and continuing improvement of the site visit process and performance will increase the precision and consistency of the entire accreditation function.

The COA-NDT is very grateful to you, the site visitor, for your expertise and time donated to assure that quality educational opportunities are being provided to student technologists.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of the site visit is to assess the program's compliance with the Standards, the nature and manner in which the program's objectives are being met, and self-identified concerns or problems and how they are being addressed. The team's responsibility is to CLARIFY and VERIFY the information submitted by the program in its self-study report. It is the responsibility of the COA-NDT to determine on the basis of the self-study report and team findings, the extent and degree of sponsor/program compliance with the Standards. The site visitors do not have the authority to speak on behalf of the COA-NDT or CAAHEP regarding a program's compliance with the Standards. The team cannot predict accreditation actions; these final responsibilities and decisions rest with the COA-NDT and CAAHEP.

In addition, it is extremely important that site visitors avoid comparing the program being evaluated with their own program. Again, the purpose of the site visit is to assess the program's compliance with the Standards. Making comparisons to personal programs is unacceptable.

## **III. BEFORE THE SITE VISIT**

### **A. CoA-NDT Self-Study Review**

When a self-study is received by the CoA-NDT, it is reviewed by a minimum of two (2) members of the Committee. A written assessment from each reviewer is presented to the Committee at a scheduled meeting. The Committee determines whether to proceed with a site visit or request further information from the applicant program. Once the CoA-NDT has approved the program for a site visit, the Executive Office will work with the program to set a date for the visit and begin recruiting site visitors. A thorough and accurate evaluation of the NDT program can be conducted within a period of approximately 1-2 days, depending on the add-ons being reviewed.

### **B. Site Visitor Self-Study Review**

The program will provide site visitors with an electronic copy of the self-study and supplementary documentation on CD. Upon receipt, site visitors should review its content in relation to the Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Neurodiagnostic Technology.

- Site Visitors will receive copies of the CoA-NDT reviewers' written assessments and other documentation/clarification that may have been requested during the initial review. The site

visitors should pay close attention to any issues identified in the initial CoA-NDT review and provide specific responses to each concern in the site visit report.

- Following review of the self-study and additional documentation, the team chair should communicate with the team member prior to the site visit in order to identify concerns, outline specific areas for inspection and develop strategies for data collection and evaluation. It is also recommended that the site visit team meet the night prior to the site visit for further discussion.
- Team members should communicate with the Executive Office regarding any questions or concerns that may arise.

\*Suggestions for reviewing a self-study are included in Appendix A.

### **C. Site Visit Agenda**

The program is responsible for arranging the site visit agenda based on the following recommended CoA-NDT outline. The program director will forward a copy of the draft agenda to both site visitors for review and approval prior to finalizing the day's events.

#### Site Visit Schedule Outline

- A. Meet with Institutional Chief Administrative Officer or representative(s) (30 minutes)
- B. Meet with students from each class (2 hours)
- C. Tour educational facilities (2 hours)
- D. Lunch/review program documentation (2 hours)
- E. Visit Clinical Affiliate(s) (2 hours per affiliate)
- F. Meet with Program Director (1 hour)
- G. Meet with Medical Director (15 minutes)
- H. Meet with program faculty (30 minutes)
- I. Executive Session to prepare site visit report (1 hour)
- J. Exit Meeting (30 minutes)

\*The above times are estimates. Times may vary based on travel time, location of affiliates, and availability of personnel. In addition, times may change based upon findings on-site.

## **IV. DURING THE SITE VISIT**

### **A. Opening Meeting**

The first encounter with program personnel and sponsor administration should be in the form of an orientation session. At this meeting the team chair should explain that he/she and the team member are representing the Committee on Accreditation for Education in Neurodiagnostic Technology (CoA-NDT) and the Commission on Accreditation for Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). The team chair should clearly state the purpose of the site visit and explain how the visit will be conducted.

### **B. Data Collection**

The site visit team should solicit, collect, verify and interpret all information likely to demonstrate the program's degree of compliance with the Standards by:

1. inspecting all pertinent facilities and resources;
2. reviewing and analyzing relevant program documentation and reports; and
3. interviewing key program personnel, support staff, students, graduates, and Advisory Committee members.

At the conclusion of the visit but before the exit meeting, the team usually meets to review the information gathered from the day's activities and incorporates this information into the Site Visit Report.

### **C. Closing Meeting:**

The exit interview is a time to receive validations of the data gathered and inform the program of site visit findings. The team chair should begin the closing meeting by thanking program and sponsor personnel for courtesies extended during the site visit. The team chair should then read the following standardized statement, which is also located on the last page of the Site Visit Report.

“As site visitors for CAAHEP and its Committee on Accreditation for Neurodiagnostic Technology, we understand that information has been made available to us about the program, institution, and faculty. We agree to respect and protect this information. All discussions and written information provided prior to, during and after the site visit will remain confidential. Our report will be sent to the CoA-NDT. The CoA-NDT will forward a findings letter to the program for a response. The CoA-NDT will evaluate and discuss these findings and the program’s response at the next CoA-NDT meeting, and submit its final recommendation to CAAHEP for action.

A CoA-NDT Post Site Visit Questionnaire will be emailed to the Program Director and Dean following this site visit. In addition, an Accreditation Process Assessment will be emailed to the Program Director and Dean from CAAHEP, *after CAAHEP takes action on the CoA-NDT recommendation*. Please take the time to complete and return these questionnaires, which will assist in improve the review process.”

This statement should be followed by a review of site visit findings, including strengths and areas of non-compliance. Avoid imposing personal judgments or opinions, but rather stick to the facts. It is the responsibility of the COA-NDT to determine the extent to which a program complies with the Standards.

Most program officials are not surprised at the findings. For program officials that are surprised and act defensive, reiterate that they will have an opportunity to respond to the concerns when they receive the finding report from the CoA-NDT.

During the exit meeting, team members should: present strengths honestly, in a genuine manner; be clear and concise with areas of non-compliance and cite the concerns with a specific Standard and give examples; and invite questions from the program if the finding is unclear.

The site visitors **will not** leave a copy of the Site Visit Report with the program. The CoA-NDT will generate a findings letter based on the report and will forward it to program and sponsor personnel.

### **V. AFTER THE SITE VISIT**

The team chair, along with input from the team member, will complete the Site Visit Report. The team chair will submit a completed, signed copy of the Site Visit Report to the CoA-NDT Executive Office within two (2) weeks following the site visit. Both team members will submit an expense report, including receipts, to the CoA-NDT for reimbursement of incurred expenses within two (2) weeks of the visit for reimbursement.

Site visitors shall maintain their own personal notes of the site visit in a confidential fashion so as to be able to discuss all of the details and their conclusions with the CoA-NDT, if necessary. Site visitors shall continue to maintain their notes until the CAAHEP Board acts on the recommendation of the CoA-NDT. After the CAAHEP Board decision and communication with the program under consideration, and after any time period has elapsed wherein the program may appeal the accreditation decision, site visitors should fully destroy (shred) their personal notes.

The CoA-NDT sends a post site visit questionnaire to the program following the site visit. The questionnaire allows the program to evaluate the site visitors and its interaction with the CoA-NDT Executive Office. In addition, CAAHEP sends an Accreditation Process Assessment questionnaire to the program after CAAHEP has taken action on the recommendation submitted by the CoA-NDT. A copy of both questionnaires is available in Appendix C.

## VI. PREPARING THE SITE VISIT REPORT

The Site Visit Report is held confidential to the CoA-NDT and site visitors and is not shared with the program. Site visitors do not leave a copy of the report with the program. The CoA-NDT summarizes findings contained in the report and distributes a findings letter to the program following the visit.

The Site Visit Report is completed jointly by both members of the site visit team. The team chair is responsible for submission of the report to the CoA-NDT within two (2) weeks following the visit. The report must be signed by *both* site visitors.

The confidential report should include areas of non-compliance that are directly related to a Standard. Areas of non-compliance should be written as factual statements, should include the Standards reference number being cited, and must be accompanied by evidence to substantiate the area of non-compliance.

For example, if the area of non-compliance is inadequate physician interaction, substantiation may consist of: reference to statements made by students or staff; admission of non-participation by the physician(s) concerned; and/or absence of any formally scheduled physician interaction with the program. A sample citation follows:

Standard III.C.2 Physician Interaction

Students stated that physicians are not readily available for record review.

The guidelines that accompany the Standards (which are all of the italic print in the Standards document) provide examples that are intended to assist in interpreting the Standards. *A program should not be cited on anything corresponding with a guideline.*

Site visitors should be sure they have specifically addressed any areas identified as possible concerns during the initial CoA-NDT review of the self-study.

Site visitors should also note program strengths and suggestions for enhancement on the applicable pages of the report.

If a site visitor feels there may be an issue within a program, but it is something that cannot be directly related to a **Standard**, include information in the comments section. Additionally, comments about the program or site visit process, including any areas of disagreement between site visitors, should be noted in the comments section.

## VII. SUMMARY OF TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Team Chair

- The team chair will thoroughly review the self-study and be familiar with the program.
- The team chair will contact the program director to introduce himself/herself and touch base prior to the site visit.
- The team chair will communicate with the team member prior to the site visit.

- The team chair will act as the spokesperson during the visit. He/she will begin the initial group meeting with program personnel and sponsor administration as well as the exit meeting held at the end of the visit.
- The team chair will ask appropriate questions for fact gathering and to clarify any questions from the review of the self-study. The team member will assist in asking questions and fact gathering.
- The team chair will return the completed and signed Site Visit Report to the COA-NDT office within two (2) weeks of the visit, provide a copy to the team member, and keep a copy for himself/herself.

**B. Team Member**

- The team member will thoroughly review the self-study and be familiar with the program.
- The team member will assist in asking questions and fact gathering during the visit.
- The team member will assist in completion of the Site Visit Report.
- The team member will confirm that the Site Visit Report has been forwarded to the COA-NDT office.
- The team member will be ready to step up as team chair in an emergency.

**C. Both Team Members**

- The team members will submit an expense report, including receipts, for reimbursement of incurred expenses to the CoA-NDT within two (2) weeks of the visit for reimbursement.
- The team members will communicate with the CoA-NDT Executive Office if there is a concern about a team member's performance.
- The team members will communicate with the CoA-NDT Executive Office if any improper or unusual circumstance occurred which could affect the validity of the site visit.
- The team members should not be afraid to ask questions or contact the COA-NDT if they are unsure of something

**SUGGESTIONS FOR REVIEWING A SELF-STUDY REPORT**

Once you are scheduled for an on-site visit, you will receive a copy of the program's self-study. As you become a more experienced site visitor you will develop your own method of reviewing a self-study report.

One way to review a self-study is to:

1. Skim It
  - How is it organized?
  - Did the program follow the prescribed format?
  - What add-on(s) is being reviewed for accreditation, if any?
  - Get a feel for the self-study.
2. Program Data
  - What type of program is it? (Bachelors, Certificate, Masters)
  - What are the program's outcomes?
3. Clinical Affiliates
  - Rotation schedule
  - Clinical instructors are certified and qualified
4. Didactic
  - Clock hours in the classroom
  - Sequence of courses
  - Are didactic and clinical integrated in an effective way?
5. Faculty
  - Qualified by education and experience
6. Library
  - Recent texts and supporting materials apparent
  - Access to up-to-date resources (i.e., internet, . . .)
7. Budget
  - Who supports the program? (i.e., institution, program, grants)
8. Clinical
  - Number of hours
  - Documentation to show hours
  - Does each student get a similar experience?
9. Strengths and Weaknesses
  - What does the program state as their strengths and weaknesses?
10. Develop set questions you want to ask and be specific in relation to the Standards.
11. Review your questions and skim the self-study on the plane to refresh yourself with the program.

## SAMPLE SITE VISIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When conducting interviews during a site visit, formulate questions that relate directly to the Standards and Guidelines and how they are being met. Keep in mind any concerns identified during the initial self-study review and assessment conducted by the CoA-NDT, as well as any areas of concern raised during the site visitor's review of the self-study.

### For Program Director:

How long have you been with the program?

Do you get the support you need from Administration?

What facilities are you missing?

Do you have any difficulty getting clinical contracts?

Do you have any difficulties getting faculty?

What library or learning resource material do you have and do you need more?

Does the program have adequate ancillary facilities?

Is laboratory equipment and space readily available to support the curriculum?

Does the program annually assess its resources and outcomes and use the results to improve the program?

Describe activities and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee. How often does the Advisory Committee meet?

Describe methods used to evaluate the program.

Do you belong to and participate in your professional society?

### For School Administrator:

Is the school committed to keeping this program?

What is your source of budget funding for this program? Are financial resources adequate to achieve program goals?

Does the program annually assess its resources and outcomes and use the results to improve the program?

How do you evaluate the program's success or failure?

How does the school recruit for this program?

How do you evaluate the community need?

What constitutes the "communities of interest" for this area?

What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

### For Medical Director:

Describe your involvement in the program, including instruction, evaluation, etc.

Describe how you promote the cooperation of other practicing physicians to support the program and its students.

How do you assure that medical components of the curriculum meet current standards of medical practice?

### For Current Students:

*Before interviewing students, emphasize that their input is needed to help improve the program. Site visitors are not there to fail the program; rather they are there to assess compliance with educational standards and identify areas that can make the program better.*

How did you choose NDT when you were looking at college?

What are the best things about the program that immediately come to mind?

What are the worst things about the program that immediately come to mind?

How far do you have to travel for your clinical site(s)?

Are there any problems with your clinical site(s)?

Do clinical instructors appear to be familiar with program expectations and goals?  
Who do you go to if you have a problem in class or clinical?  
How do you track your experiences in the clinical area?  
Describe interaction you have had with physicians during your education and clinical experience.  
Are you given sufficient feedback regarding your progress made in the program?  
Have you joined your professional society?

For Graduates:

How did you choose the NDT career?  
What problems did you think the program had while you were a student?  
Did you have help getting a job? How long did it take for you to get hired?  
Are you working in a location and area (EEG, EP, LTM, IONM, etc) that you want?  
Do you or did you feel prepared for the first day of work?  
What problems have you encountered in your job that might have not occurred had you been better prepared?  
What changes would you recommend to the program?  
Do you belong to and participate in your professional society?  
Have you become registered or taken any of the registry exams?

For Employers:

Do you feel students from this program are well-prepared to enter the field?  
Do you have input into the program's Advisory Committee?  
What are the programs strengths?  
What would you add to this program?

Clinical Instructors:

Do clinical resources provide each student with sufficient learning opportunities to ensure achievement of program goals?  
What physician interaction takes place between students and physicians?  
What training/orientation did the program provide prior to the student's placement at the affiliate?  
What ongoing communication and support does the program provide?  
Describe methods used to evaluate students. How often are these methods employed?

**COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION FOR EDUCATION IN  
NEURODIAGNOSTIC TECHNOLOGY (CoA-NDT)**

a Committee on Accreditation of



**POST SITE VISIT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name of Sponsoring Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the letter which best describes your response to each statement below with respect to the ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SITE VISIT. The letters correspond to the following values:

S = Satisfactory      U = Unsatisfactory      N/A = Not Able to Comment

- |    |   |   |   |     |
|----|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. | Overall site visit arrangements by the CoA-NDT:   | S | U | N/A |
| 2. | Availability of the CoA-NDT to assist the program in preparing for the site visit:                      | S | U | N/A |
| 3. | Communication by the CoA-NDT with the program prior to the site visit:                                  | S | U | N/A |
| 4. | The time that elapsed between submission of the self-study report and the site visit, _____months, was: | S | U | N/A |
| 5. | The number of site visit team members, _____, was:  | S | U | N/A |

COMMENTS:

Please circle the letter which best describes your response to each statement below with respect to the PERFORMANCE OF THE SITE VISITOR(S). Please include comments in the space provided about any negative responses.

S = Satisfactory      U = Unsatisfactory      N/A = Not Able to Comment

- |     |  |   |   |     |
|-----|--|---|---|-----|
| 6.  | The site visitor(s)' <i>attitudes</i> while conducting the site visit:<br>Comments:                        | S | U | N/A |
| 7.  | The site visitor(s)' <i>competence</i> as surveyor(s)/evaluator(s):<br>Comments:                           | S | U | N/A |
| 8.  | The site visitor(s)' <i>knowledge</i> of the program through review of the self-study report:<br>Comments: | S | U | N/A |
| 9.  | The site visitor(s)' <i>objectivity</i> in applying the <b>Standards</b> to the program:<br>Comments:      | S | U | N/A |
| 10. | The site visitor(s)' <i>interaction</i> with program faculty during the site visit:<br>Comments:           | S | U | N/A |
| 11. | The site visitor(s)' <i>interaction</i> with clinical faculty during the site visit:<br>Comments:          | S | U | N/A |
| 12. | The site visitor(s)' <i>interaction</i> with the students during the site visit:<br>Comments:              | S | U | N/A |
| 13. | The site visitor(s)' conduct at the exit meeting:<br>Comments:   | S | U | N/A |
| 14. | The clarity of the report of findings during the exit meeting:<br>Comments:                                | S | U | N/A |

◆ Please comment and/or give suggestions for improving the accreditation process:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (please print) Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Thank you for your response to the Post Site Visit Questionnaire. Please return to: CoA-NDT, 22 Railroad Avenue, Suite 3, Beverly, MA 01915. Should you have questions about this form, contact Jackie Long-Goding at office@coa-ndt.org or 978-338-6300.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL SITE VISITORS

**BACKGROUND** Site visitors have sufficient general education and special training specific to a professional discipline to form a solid foundation for program evaluation. The amount and kind of such education and training depends upon the type and level of program to be evaluated. Evaluators may be either generalists or content specialists who are themselves practitioners or educators within the field of training represented by the program.

**ATTITUDE** Effective site visitors demonstrate maturity, objectivity, diplomacy and dedication. They project an image of professionalism both in behavior and in appearance. Site visitors appreciate the confidential nature of the task and understand the need for self initiative, for a cooperative attitude, for an analytic approach to the task, and for necessary degrees of flexibility.

**KNOWLEDGE** Effective site visitors have an appreciation of the current status of the occupation involved and of the entire accrediting process. They have sufficient general and special background to be able to exercise appropriate judgment. In addition, effective visitors thoroughly understand the educational standards being used and what constitutes deviation from or non-compliance with those standards. It is imperative that site visitors be totally familiar with the content of the Self-Study Report and related materials provided to them prior to the site visit.

**SKILLS** Site visitors are skilled in interviewing, in interpersonal communications, in self expression, in note-taking and in maintaining objectivity. They are skillful in dealing with attitudinal problems that may be presented by those being interviewed. Through experience and education, site visitors have developed capacities for deductive reasoning and for logical analysis. They are skilled in writing and accurate in recall.

**PHYSICAL FACTORS** The physical condition of the site visitors permits them to do whatever is necessary to conduct the visit in the particular locale and within the specified period.

## TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE SITE VISIT TEAM

1. **DON'T SNITCH** Site visitors often learn private matters about an institution that an outsider has no business knowing. Don't "tell tales" or talk about the weaknesses of an institution.
2. **DON'T STEAL APPLES** Site visitors often discover promising personnel. Don't take advantage of the opportunity afforded by your position on the team to recruit good faculty members.
3. **DON'T BE ON THE TAKE** Site visitors may be invited to accept small favors, services, or gifts from the institution. Don't accept, or even suggest, that you would like to have a sample of the wares of an institution—a book it publishes, a product it produces, or a service it performs.
4. **DON'T BE A CANDIDATE** Site visitors might see an opportunity to suggest themselves for a consultantship, temporary job, or a permanent position with the institution. Don't apply or suggest your availability until after your site visit report has been officially acted on.
5. **DON'T BE A NIT-PICKER** Site visitors often see small problems that can be solved by attention to minor details. Don't use the accreditation report, which should deal with major or serious policy-level matters, as the means of effecting minor mechanical reforms.
6. **DON'T SHOOT SMALL GAME WITH A BIG GUN** The accreditation process is developmental, not punitive. Don't use accreditation to deal heavily with small programs that may feel that they are completely at the mercy of the site visitors.
7. **DON'T BE A BLEEDING HEART** Site visitors with "do-good" impulses may be blinded by good intentions and try to play the role of savior. Don't compound weakness by sentimental generosity in the hope that a school's problems will go away if ignored or treated with unwarranted optimism.
8. **DON'T PUSH DOPE** Site visitors often see an opportunity to recommend their personal theories, philosophies, or techniques as the solution to a program's problems. Don't suggest that an institution adopt measures that may be altered or reversed by the review committee or by subsequent site visit teams.
9. **DON'T SHOOT POISON DARTS** A committee may be tempted to "tip off" the administration to suspect treachery or to warn one faction on a campus of hidden enemies. Don't poison the minds of the staff or reveal suspicions to the administration; there are more wholesome ways to alert an administration to hidden tensions.
10. **DON'T WORSHIP SACRED COWS** Don't be so in awe of a large and powerful institution that you are reluctant to criticize an obvious problem in some department.

\*Adapted and summarized from "A Decalogue for the Accreditation Team," Hector lee (COPA) Agenda, February 5, 1976.