

## IDP Training Documentation: Creating the Best Experience

The Intern Development Program (IDP) has long been considered an integral part of the process for emerging professionals to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to practice architecture. Currently, 51 of the 54 Member Boards require participation in IDP for initial registration. There has been much discussion in recent years about ways to strengthen the effectiveness and validity of the IDP. At the last two Annual Meetings, Member Boards have voiced concern that because most interns are not following the current IDP documentation guidelines, they are not getting as much out of their internship as they could.

NCARB currently recommends that documented IDP training activity be reported every four months. In actuality, nearly 80 percent of interns document training periods longer than four months, and over 20 percent document the entirety of their IDP activity in a single report (paying an extra fee of \$570). Extended

retroactive documentation has led to significant reporting errors with approximately 20 percent of such reports rejected due to such errors. This leads to frustration for interns and added but avoidable delays when processing IDP records.

In an effort to improve both the accuracy of reporting, and the overall IDP experience, as well as reduce the amount of time it takes to complete IDP, the IDP Committee has recommended that the Council adopt a mandatory and maximum reporting period for IDP training documentation of six months. A resolution may be brought to the Member Boards at the 2008 NCARB Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh next June, projecting an implementation of this new rule by the end of the calendar year 2009, assuming that all technical support systems within the NCARB office operation are in place.

**ENRICHING THE IDP EXPERIENCE**

The purpose of IDP is to serve as an active tool that will assist interns and their supervisors in the process of developing the skills and knowledge required by the profession. The practice of architecture encompasses a range of activities, and the 16 Training Areas of IDP assure that interns will enjoy the benefit of practice-based learning in all of these areas. The interns' qualitative experience is enriched—and their path toward licensure is more targeted—when they use the mechanisms inherent in IDP.

Regular, contemporaneous reporting ensures that an intern will complete requirements in a timely fashion—and makes the process smoother. By documenting training hours every few months (with six months as the maximum), interns and supervisors can review the progress and develop a plan for acquiring training in the remaining areas. Again, this helps makes the experience more beneficial for the intern.

**DELAYED REPORTING HAS INHERENT PROBLEMS**

When training activities are reported well after the fact, IDP simply becomes a time-tracking process, with no potential to adjust the nature of the work experience along the path toward licensure. All too often, interns who fail to submit training unit reports on a regular basis find that at the end of three years of working as an intern, they still lack the necessary hours to complete certain training areas, and then must delay becoming licensed. In addition, late reporting may lead to errors and a lengthy evaluation and acceptance process.

Delayed reporting may result in interns encountering other issues such as a previous supervisors' reluctance to verify past experience that the supervisor may have forgotten, or previous supervisors having left the firm or no longer in practice. There have even been times when interns have "guestimated" their experience resulting in professional conduct violations for both the supervisor and the intern. Simply put, it is difficult to remember and report training activities long after they have taken place.

**CONTEMPORANEOUS REPORTING PROPOSAL**

The IDP Committee considers contemporaneous reporting of IDP training units an integral part of the Intern Development Program. For this reason, they have recommended that the *Handbook for Interns and Architects* be amended to require that interns report their training activity to NCARB for periods of no longer than six months duration by submitting a form within 45 days of the end of such reporting period.

As an example, an individual taking maximum advantage of the new requirement would have until September 14 to report training activity that occurred between February 1 and July 31. Individuals will still be able—and are encouraged—to report training activity more frequently. An extension of the six-month

reporting and/or 45 day filing period will be considered in circumstances where reporting and/or filing is prevented by a medical condition, by active duty in military service, natural disasters, or by other like causes.

This proposed rule would not apply to anyone who has established an NCARB Record prior to the implementation date, and it is proposed only for initial examination candidates after that date. It is the IDP Committee's goal and belief that this new rule will both enhance the internship experience and reduce the time it takes to fulfill the IDP training requirements.

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**Using Timesheets to Document IDP**

Did you know that many firms around the country have incorporated IDP codes into their electronic timesheets? This has proven to be a great boon to both the intern—who saves time by categorizing their training hours as they accrue—and to the supervisor—who is able to verify the hours spent in each training area easily.

Often this change has been made at the intern's request. Most firms have welcomed the suggestion because adding IDP codes to timesheets is a relatively simple process that benefits all involved. By utilizing the IDP codes, the intern can generate an accurate account of the time spent in each training area for each reporting period.

If your firm's timesheets don't include IDP codes, talk to the principals at your firm about adding them. Chances are they will be very receptive to this easy way to improve your IDP experience.