Making the Transition –
From Clinical Coordinator to
Program Director

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Objectives

- Compare roles of clinical coordinator vs. program director
- Discuss leadership challenges and opportunities
- Provide tips and strategies for success in the new role

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Gratuitous "About Me" Slide

Full-time staff sonographer 1993 – 2005	Education and Research Technical Coordinator 2005 – 2008	Clinical Coordinator 2008 – Present

1991-1993 ————————— Present

Adjunct instructor 2005 – 2008	Interim/Permanent Program Director 2021 - Present

- ABOB, cardiac and vascular sonography
- 52 students total

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2025 SDMS Annual Conference

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What is your role within your DMS/CV program? Choose the one that MOST applies.

Program director
0%

Clinical coordinator
0%

Full-time lecturer/faculty
0%

Part-time or adjunct faculty
0%

Concentration Coordinator
0%

Clinical instructor/preceptor
0%

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Comparing the Roles

Clinical Coordinator

- Coordinate clinical education with didactic education
- Evaluate and ensure the effectiveness of clinical experiences
- Document clinical instruction, evaluation, and progression of clinical performance
- Track clinical competencies

Program Director

- The structure and daily operation of the program
- The organization, administration, periodic review, and evaluation, continued development and effectiveness of program curricula
- Ensure the effectiveness of all clinical affiliates

Source: CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Diagnostic Medical Sonography (III B-2a and III-B-1a)

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Potential Program Director Pathways

You saw a job posting and applied

You were promoted to program director

Surprise! You're now the program director

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So...You're Now the Program Director

"...Some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them"

– Shakespeare (*12th Night*)

"Be careful what you wish for...you may get it"

– Many attributions

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Pros of Being Program Director

Pros

Leadership role

Higher pay*

Networking and professional development

Positive impact on program

Advancement to a higher role (Department chair, Dean, C-suite)

Less clinical site involvement

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Cons of Being Program Director

- More work, stress
- Frustration dealing with bureaucracy
  - Lack of capital funding
- Still have internal and external service, teaching responsibilities
- Not really that much more pay*
- A lot depends on your team
- Less clinical site involvement

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LinkedIn →

PROGRAM DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS

jrcdms.org

- Minimum of a Baccalaureate degree
- Appropriate credentials specific to one or more of the concentration(s) offered
- Documented experience in supervision, instruction, evaluation, student guidance and in educational theories and techniques
- Minimum of 2 years of experience as a registered sonographer in the professional sonography field

Are you qualified?

- **CAAHEP minimum requirements**
  - Minimum Baccalaureate degree
  - Appropriate credentials to *one or more* of the concentrations offered
  - Documented experience in supervision, instruction, evaluation, student guidance, and educational theories and techniques
  - Minimum two years of experience as a credentialed sonographer

Source: CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Diagnostic Medical Sonography (III-B-1b)
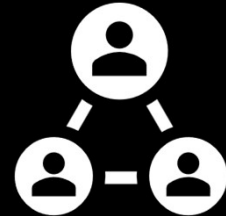
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Who is your mentor?

- Can you reach out to the previous program director?
- Talk to other program directors in your school
- Expand your network – connect with other program directors
  - Professional society meetings
  - Educator meetings (SDMS, IFSER, CCI)
  - CAAHEP annual meeting and COA meetings (e.g., JRC-DMS)

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Program Director/Manager Toolbox

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Live and Breathe the CAAHEP Accreditation Standards (and P&P)

Always act like it's a self-study year

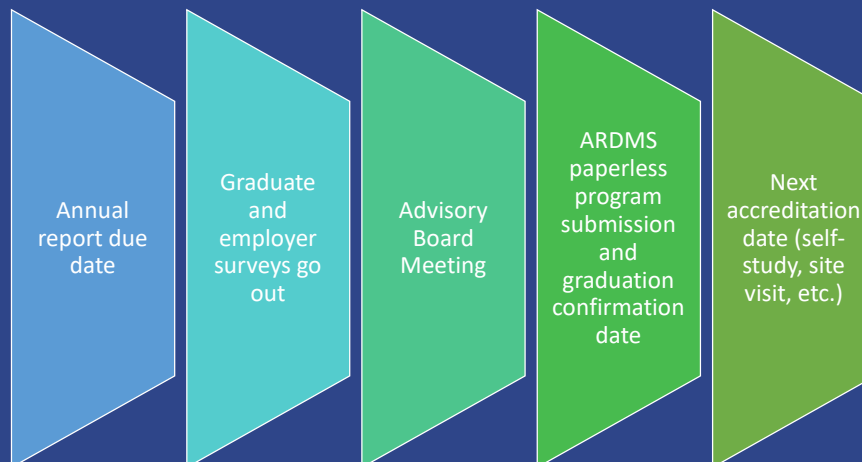- Keep records in order
- Collect data beyond the annual report

Critically evaluate the concentration(s) based on the Standards

- Evaluate all competencies
- Sit with clinical/concentration coordinators 1 on 1 and evaluate didactic, lab, clinical

https://www.jrcdms.org/

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Write down **key dates** (and put them where your successor can find them)

| Annual report due date | Graduate and employer surveys go out | Advisory Board Meeting | ARDMS paperless program submission and graduation confirmation date | Next accreditation date (self-study, site visit, etc.) |

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Emergency Transition Book (File)

- Maintain an emergency transition folder on a shared drive or on paper on an accessible file
- Refer to the Standards
- Secure shared drive with all files related to program and accreditation, including the last accreditation or reaccreditation
- Someone else should have access to JRC-DMS portal (Chair, Dean, vice-PD, etc.)

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To Teach or Not to Teach Classes

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If you are a program director/manager, how many classes do you teach?

0

1

2

More than 2

All of them

21

If you are a program director/manager, how many classes do you teach?

0

0%

1

0%

2

0%

More than 2

0%

All of them

0%

22

If you are a program director/manager, how many classes do you teach?
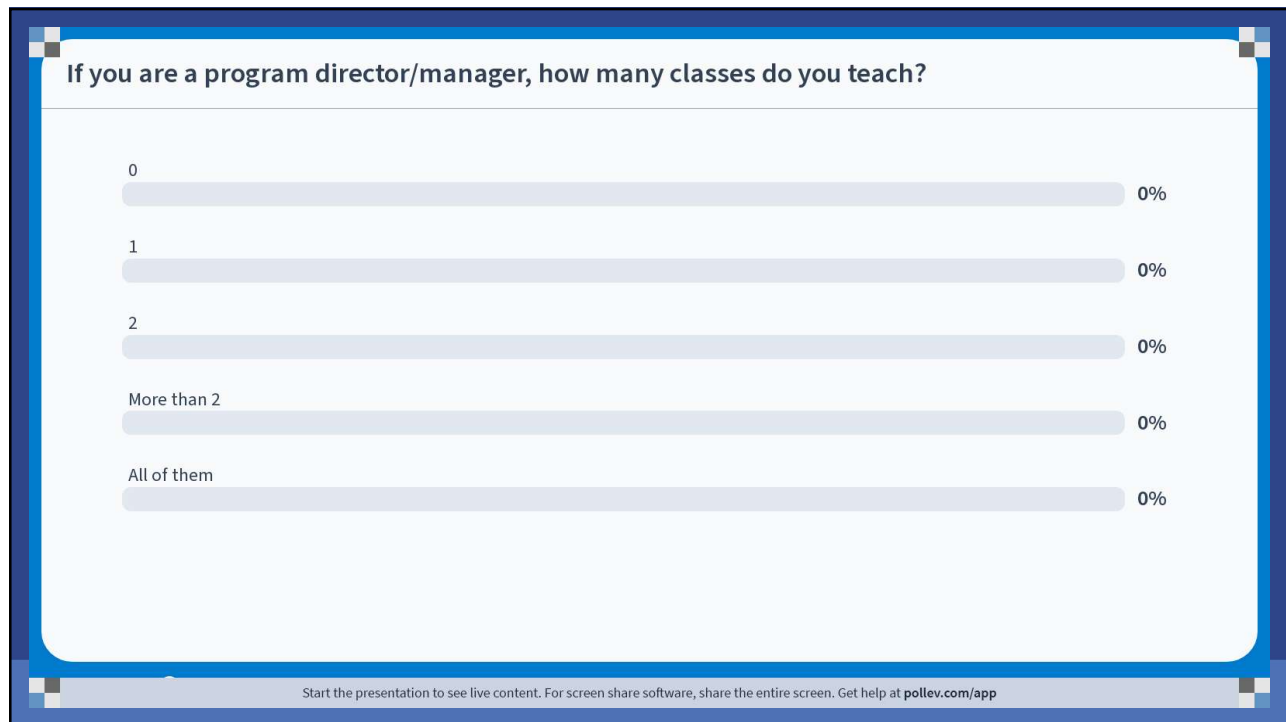
0
0%

1
0%

2
0%

More than 2
0%

All of them
0%

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What to do first?

- Evaluate your team
  - Add/Cut where needed (if possible)
- Foster teamwork
- Find out from internal and external partners what worked well and what is needed

Baheti, A. D., Fessell, D. P., & Bhargava, P. (2018). First-time manager: Transitioning into a leadership role. Journal of the American College of Radiology, 15(2), 368-370.

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Resource Analysis

- Human capital
  - Access to past PD or another's school's PD
  - Collaborate with PD's of another program in your department
- What physical resources does your program have?
  - Are they adequate?
  - Is capital money or grant money available?
  - Is medical director engaged?

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Leadership vs. Management

- **Leaders are change drivers who:**
  - Create a vision
  - Identify obstacles to that vision
  - Provide momentum to move forward despite the obstacles

- **Managers are shepherds who:**
  - Guide people to accomplish set goals repeatedly
  - Motivate production

Vision

Alignment

Production

Organizing

https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/leadership-vs-management

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Let's Build a Program Director

- Activity:

  - Build a program director you'd like to see (or be)

    - Talk to people around you (groups of 3-4)
    - One person from group enter a word or statement into the poll
    - Upvote (👍) or downvote (👎) other responses

https://deepai.org/machine-learning-model/text2img

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Share your feedback and upvote entries that you think are most important

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

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Characteristics of a Good Program Director

Organization skills

Don't get overwhelmed

Create your own strategic plan (30 days out, 6 months, etc.)

Have a good relationship with your faculty

Communicate

Mentorship

What else?

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Characteristics of a Not-So-Good Program Director

Don't be available

Avoid work

Don't communicate with fellow faculty or students

Be late with the annual report or data collection

Ignore complaints from administration, faculty, students

Try to please everyone

Show a preference to select students or faculty

What else?

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Communication

- Have an academic and clinical handbook with defined policies
  - Check the Standards
- Have frequent program meetings
  - Do you know what is being taught in your program?
  - Is everything aligned with the accreditation curriculum?

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Challenges Ahead

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Challenges from Above

- Support from your institution or medical director?
- Support from department chair? Or Dean?
- Capital funding?
- Operating budget?
- Grant support?

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More challenges

- Co-faculty compatibility
- How many program directors do you have in one department?
  - Have a vice-program director?
- State or institutional mandates
  - Accepting every student that applies
  - Accepting students with poor academic track records

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Tell me: Who is in your advisory board?

- Medical director(s)/physicians
- Sponsor administration
- Leadership (dean, department chair)
- Clinical instructors/employers
- Graduates
- Current students
- Faculty
- Public member
  - Who is a good public member?

- Not someone in field of sonography or related industry
- Not related to member of committee
  - Spouse, parent, partner, dependent
- Not currently or previously employed by institution

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What is your feeling on the support you get from your upper management/institutional leadership?

♡ 0

A --Wow - they are amazing. We get what we need. **(A)**

B --We get most of what we need but we could use more **(B)**

C --We lack important resources but get by **(C)**

F --Leadership doesn't even know we exist **(D)**

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Professional Development

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Executive Function/Skills

- Effective communication
- Willingness to change
- Organization
- Time management
- Emotional regulation
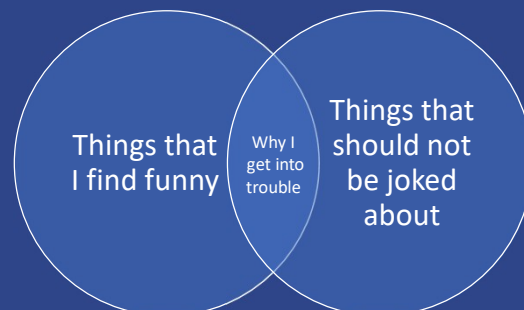- Working memory
- Decision making

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Executive Function/Skills

- Adaptability to new situations
  - Are you ready for AI?
  - Can you move online if you need to?

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Communication

- What you want to say
- What you say

  Executive function

Things that I find funny | Why I get into trouble | Things that should not be joked about

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That isn't in the handbook...

- Innovative solutions to unpredictable problems
  - Students violating clinical or academic handbook
    - See: importance of having a handbook
  - Clinical site preceptors behaving badly
  - Clinical sites that won't fail students who should fail
  - My first day on the job as clinical coordinator
  - Know when to involve the department chair or immediate supervisor

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That isn't in the handbook...

Using or Selling Drugs

Physical abuse

Eating

Chair wheels

Records Issue

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Leadership Challenges

- **Change management**
  - New programs
  - New faculty (or sudden faculty departures)
  - New locations/satellites
  - Increase enrollment

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Leadership Challenges

- **Crisis management**
  - Unexpected challenges
  - Broken equipment
  - Contingency plans, files on shared drive
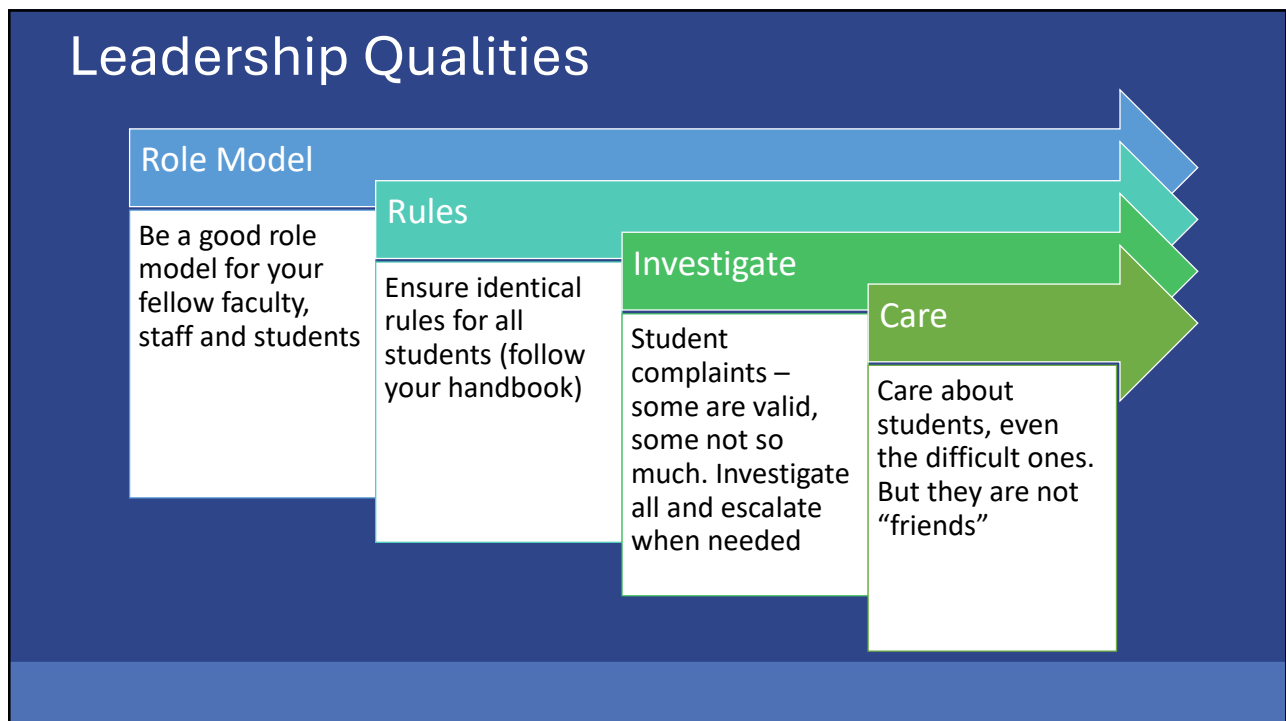 - Transition plan (into and out of position)

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Leadership Qualities

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Leadership Qualities

Role Model

Be a good role model for your fellow faculty, staff and students

Rules

Ensure identical rules for all students (follow your handbook)

Investigate

Student complaints – some are valid, some not so much. Investigate all and escalate when needed

Care

Care about students, even the difficult ones. But they are not "friends"

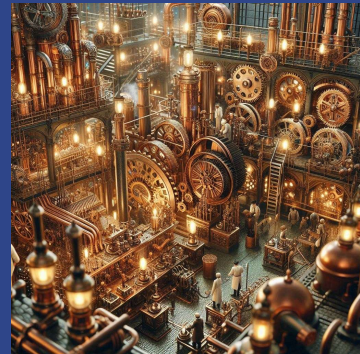46

Program Director as Change Agent

- **Program development requires change**
  - Changes in school policy, CAAHEP Standards or policies, etc.
- Program director drives the change ("**change agent**")
  - What's ahead? Challenges and opportunities?
  - What do you need to meet future needs?
- **Flexibility**
  - Revise plan as needed
- **Time**
  - Is the enemy

Stuckelman, J., Zavatchen, S. E., & Jones, S. A. (2017). The evolving role of the program coordinator: five essential skills for the coordinator toolbox. Academic Radiology, 24(6), 725-729.

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Define Your Role

- I am a "program director," not a "faculty director"
  - My department chair is the "boss"
- I am in charge of maintaining Standards and tracking outcomes
  - With assistance from my fellow faculty and my communities of interest
- I need to be motivating and recognize achievements
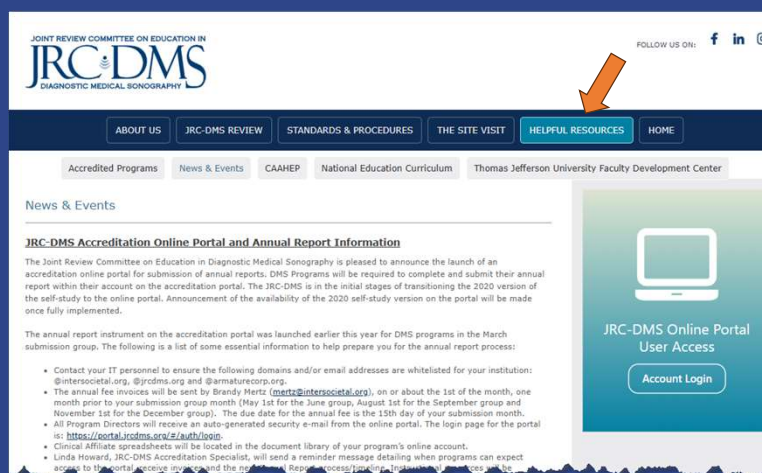- I am part of a great team

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Thoughts of my own

- Find someone smarter than you (mentor)
- Even better if they are or have been program director
- Get professional development
  - Pedagogy
  - Leadership
  - Conflict resolution
- Network – go to professional meetings
- Continuous improvement (personal and program)

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Helpful Resources

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More Helpful Resources

- Consider MS/EdD/PhD degree in management or education
- Internal faculty development
- Current education literature
- Educator meetings (related to or unrelated to sonography)
    - SDMS
    - IFSER
    - CCI
    - CAAHEP
    - Lilly Conferences
    - Hawaiian International Conference on Education
    - Other

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Expect the Unexpected

- There's no school or training program for becoming a clinical coordinator or program director
- Students will find ways to come up with new, as-yet-unexperienced dilemmas
- Learn to roll with it

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In closing...

Change is scary...and difficult without good support

Check your toolbox: Have a written plan for transitioning

Leadership and organization skills are key

Faculty development and executive skills also important

Welcome change and prepare for challenges

Thank you to the SDMS for this opportunity and to you all for attending

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References

- Baheti, A. D., Fessell, D. P., & Bhargava, P. (2018). First-time manager: Transitioning into a leadership role. Journal of the American College of Radiology, 15(2), 368-370.

- JRCDMS. (2021). *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Diagnostic Medical Sonography.* Retrieved on 12/15/24 from https://www.jrcdms.org/standards.htm#gsc.tab=0

- Stuckelman, J., Zavatchen, S. E., & Jones, S. A. (2017). The evolving role of the program coordinator: five essential skills for the coordinator toolbox. Academic Radiology, 24(6), 725-729.

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