

Date

Masters Program Admissions Committee
University of California, San Francisco
School of Nursing
Student Affairs Office
2 Koret Way, Room N319X
San Francisco, CA 94143-0602

RE: *Mentee Doe*, Program Applicant

Dear Committee Members,

It is my pleasure to write this letter of reference for Ms. *Mentee Doe*, who is applying to the Masters Program in Nursing at UCSF. For the past two and a half years Ms. *Doe* has worked as a study coordinator for the East Bay site of the Women's Interagency HIV Study in Northern California, of which I am Principal Investigator. I have directly interacted with her at staff meetings, in discussions concerning specific participants, and I direct her supervisors. Besides relying on my personal observations of her work in writing this letter, I discussed her performance and character with her supervisor and clinicians with whom she works on a day-to-day basis.

Overall Ms. *Doe's* work with our project has been superb. Before I answer each of the questions included on your reference form, it might be helpful for me to describe the WIHS project and Ms. *Doe's* role in it. The WIHS is a multisite observational cohort study of women living with HIV, and women who are at high risk for it. The cohort, which is representative of HIV cases in the Bay Area and nationally, is ethnically and socially diverse; almost half the women are African American, and the rest Hispanic (some Spanish mono-lingual), Caucasian and other ethnicities. Overall, the women are poor, many have a history of substance use and domestic violence, and many have multiple medical and psychiatric problems. This is a group of people who are under-represented in most clinical research, including AIDS research.

Educational attainment is limited, and we make a special effort to use comprehensible language in interactions with participants and in educational materials we generate for them. Ms. *Doe* schedules study appointments, does study interviews (can be up to 2 hours per visit), assists with medical procedures, draws blood, and completes substudy visits- a fairly broad job description. Now for your questions:

Relationships with work associates:

Ms. *Doe* has superb relationships with her work associates including research clinicians at clinicians based at Highland Hospital's HIV Clinic and the East Bay AIDS Center at Alta Bates Hospital. She is described as even-tempered, mission focused and someone who works well in a team to get the job done.

Work competence:

Ms. *Doe's* work is outstanding. She is responsible, reliable, and has skill as a problem solver. She tends to understate her abilities. For example, she told us she had some skill in Spanish when she was hired, but in the field demonstrated fluency, such that our Spanish fluent staff recommended that she do interviews with Spanish monolingual participants. She also has demonstrated excellent judgment in handling sensitive problems. One study participant called Ms. *Doe* during a personal crisis reporting feeling depressed and that she had some thoughts of suicide. Ms. *Doe* immediately obtained permission to discuss the situation with the participants clinical social worker, contacted the social worker, thus initiating an effective crisis intervention; the client was hospitalized. She also discussed the situation with the WIHS Nurse Practitioner at the site. She has maintained outstanding work quality despite taking classes at night and her volunteer efforts. As Principal Investigator of WIHS, I really value Ms. *Doe's* competence; not all of our study coordinators have had this ability and motivation, and her work has made an enormous contribution.

Communication and interpersonal skills with persons of diverse educational, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds:

Ms. *Doe* has a long record of work in diverse communities reflecting a strong commitment to and interest in medically underserved populations, specifically persons living with HIV. She is a volunteer HIV test counselor and outreach worker at the Women's Community Clinic in San Francisco. She has also volunteered in a medical outreach program in Oakland. She has been great with WIHS participants, even the most difficult and is consistently respectful of them. She is able to adjust her communication style to the individual woman. The clients remember her, ask for her, reach out to her, once they meet her. She has great memory of faces and names, and the clients are very happy to see her, and seek her out in times of stress.

Leadership skills or potential:

Ms. *Doe* has not had a leadership position with our study, but she clearly has the potential to lead. She is able to function in a mission-oriented manner, and exhibits professionalism and strong personal values.

Values, ethical standards, responsibility and initiative:

Ms. *Doe* has demonstrated a long-standing interest in underserved populations. She has functioned superbly in a challenging environment, demonstrating a strong sense of responsibility and initiative. She has exhibited excellent judgment in handling sensitive situations with study participants (example above), which is wonderful since the clients seek her out with their concerns so often. She can identify problems that she needs help with and yet she shows initiative in solving problems that fall entirely within her expertise. For example, when told about a serious clinical problem, she gets help from study clinicians, but when confronted with a client who needs modification of the visit (like splitting an interview into two sessions) she works to accommodate them appropriately.

In summary, *Mentee Doe* is a superb study coordinator and interviewer who has demonstrated great work habits, ability to interact with a diverse group of clients, excellent judgment and long-standing interest in serving medically underserved populations. Her career goals of providing optimal health care to patients with extensive needs are consistent with the aims of the Masters Program at UCSF. She has my strongest endorsement, and is one of the top 3 interviewer coordinators to work with the WIHS. Do not hesitate to contact me if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

Ruth Greenblatt, MD