

Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

The *Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants* is a collaborative effort between the Organization of Program Directors Association (OPDA), Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), and American Medical Association (AMA). Its purpose is to provide specialty-specific guidance, application information, and resources. This guide outlines specialty-level guidance and policies for applicants to Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation programs.

Specialty responses in this guide were provided through a standardized web form. The corresponding questions from that form are referenced in the footnotes. If a specialty indicated "No specialty recommendation to programs," it means the specialty does not provide guidance on how programs should approach that aspect of the selection process.

Please note that not all aspects of the residency application process are standardized at the specialty level. Applicants should review individual program requirements in Residency Explorer™ tool, FREIDA™, or on program websites.

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Specialty Guidance for the 2025–2026 Cycle

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation has published a statement: None noted.

Application Process

Application Process Details	Specialty Recommendation
Main Residency Match Season	AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)
Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP)	AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)
Application deadline to be considered for interview ¹	No specialty recommendation to programs
Application materials accepted after the deadline ²	Letters of recommendation, MSPE, Step 1 or Level 1 transcripts, Step 2 or Level 2 transcripts

Additional Deadline Guidance: As early as possible. Applicants should notify each program directly (via the program coordinator) when additional materials submitted.

Match Platform

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	20
Signal home institution or away rotation sites?	Yes

Additional Guidance: None noted.

¹ By when should applicants submit applications to programs to be considered for interview?: Date applications are released to programs; Universal interview offer date for the specialty; Other

² Is it acceptable for applicants to submit some application materials after the initial application?: Yes; No

Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores

License Exam Details	Specialty Recommendation
Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be considered for interview³	No specialty recommendation to programs
Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be ranked⁴	No specialty recommendation to programs
USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?⁵	No, USMLE scores are not required for DO applicants

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
Required number of LORs	3
Required specialty-specific letters⁶	Specialty-specific standardized letter(s) of evaluation (e.g., SLOE, SEL, SLOR)

Additional Guidance for Specialty-Specific Letters: Applicants are strongly suggested to have a PM&R Standard Letter of Evaluation (SLOE) submitted. Information for the PM&R SLOE can be found on the Association of Academic Physiatrists' (AAP) website. Other narrative letters of recommendation, from PM&R faculty or other specialties, remain acceptable.

Guidance for Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: None noted.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: None noted.

Supplemental Information

³ By when must an applicant submit a USMLE Step 2 CK or COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE score to be considered for interview?: Initial application deadline; Other

⁴ By when must an applicant submit a USMLE Step 2 CK or COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE score to be ranked?: Initial application deadline; Prior to rank order list opening

⁵ Does your specialty require that DO applicants submit USMLE scores in addition to COMLEX-USA scores?: Yes, USMLE scores are required for all applicants; No, USMLE scores are not required for DO applicants

⁶ Which specialty-specific letters of recommendation should an applicant submit to a program? (Select all that apply): Specialty-specific standardized letter(s) of evaluation (e.g., SLOE, SEL, SLOR); Letter from a Chair; Letter from someone in the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending); Other letters

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials recommended	No specialty recommendation to programs

Additional Supplemental Application Materials: None noted.

Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
Away rotations in the specialty ⁷	No specialty recommendation to programs
Number of away rotations in the specialty	–

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	No specialty recommendation to programs
Typical interview offer window	No specialty recommendation to programs
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format(s) ⁸	Virtual, In-person

Additional Guidance: Programs should select a single, uniform interview format—either fully in-person or fully virtual—and communicate their decision clearly to applicants. This approach promotes equity, minimizes bias, and upholds the integrity of the residency selection process.

⁷ Does the specialty expect or strongly recommend that applicants complete away rotations in the specialty?: No; Strongly recommended; Expected

⁸ Which interview format does the specialty recommend that programs use? (Select all that apply): Virtual; In-person; Hybrid

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: None noted.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: Residency programs should communicate any post-interview communication expectations directly to applicants via their websites, social media platforms, and/or on the interview day.

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: None noted.

Second Looks: For programs conducting virtual interviews, program leaders should be cautious to ensure applicant participation in any in-person recruitment events does not bias the program's evaluation and ranking of applicants. Wherever possible, these events should take place after the program has certified their Rank Order list. Attendance should be considered optional and aimed at improving applicants' understanding of program offerings, facilities, and location and not further evaluation of applicants.

NRMP Voluntary Rank Order List (ROL) Lock Pilot Initiative: No