

Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

Family Medicine

The *Program Director Associations 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 Family Medicine programs. **Specialty-specific guidance reflects the specialty’s intent for applicant preparation and the residency application process but may not reflect all individual program requirements.** Applicants should review individual program requirements in Residency Explorer™ tool, FREIDA™, or on program websites.

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 guidance,” it means the specialty does not provide guidance on that aspect of the selection process.

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Specialty Guidance for the 2026–2027 Cycle

Specialty-Specific Resources

None noted.

Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
Away rotations in the specialty ¹	Optional, Not Expected Purpose: to gain additional exposure or confirm interest in specialty before applying
Number of away rotations in the specialty	–

Additional Guidance: Elective rotations in family medicine or related fields (i.e., adolescent medicine, geriatrics, hospice and palliative medicine, sports medicine, etc.) are encouraged during the early to mid-portions of the fourth year of medical school to gain additional exposure to and confirm interest in the specialty but not required. Elective rotations may be completed through an applicant’s home institution or another (away) institution.

Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores

License Exam Details	Specialty Recommendation
USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants? ²	No, USMLE scores are not required for DO applicants

Additional Guidance: The Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors encourages applicants to pursue licensing exams concordant with their degrees (i.e., MD applicants should submit only USMLE scores and DO applicants should submit only COMLEX-USA scores).

¹ Even if an applicant’s home institution has a program in your specialty, are completing away rotations in the specialty optional, strongly recommended, or required for applicants?: Optional, Not Expected (to gain additional exposure or confirm interest in specialty before applying); Strongly Recommended (important to being considered, but not always required given certain circumstances); Required (will not be considered without it)

² 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

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)
When programs start reviewing applications³	Date applications are released to programs by the application service
Application materials accepted after the deadline⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final letters should be submitted by time of interview. • MSPE should be submitted by time of interview. • USMLE Step 1 or COMLEX-USA Level 1 transcripts should be submitted prior to rank order list opening. • USMLE Step 2 CK or COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE transcripts should be submitted prior to rank order list opening.

Additional Guidance: Applicants to family medicine are encouraged to submit all applications materials at the time of the initial application. Delays in application materials may result in delays in application review or interview offers.

Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	5
Signal home institutions?	Yes
Signal programs where they completed away rotations?	Yes

³ Which best describes when programs will start reviewing applications for this application cycle (2026-2027)?: Date applications are released to programs; Other

⁴ Is it acceptable for applicants to submit some application materials after the initial application?: Yes; No

Additional Guidance: Applicants should use signals to indicate genuine interest in their top choices of family medicine programs at the time of application.

Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
Required number of LORs	At least 2, No more than 4
Required letter writers⁵	Applicants should submit letters from physicians who speak to the applicant's clinical skills and ability to provide comprehensive care across different patient populations and settings. When possible, at least one should be authored by a family physician
Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter?⁶	No

Additional Guidance: The Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors recommends applicants submit letters from physicians who can provide insight into the applicant's clinical skills and their ability to provide comprehensive, continuous care across different patient populations and settings. Letters from physicians in specific roles, such as Department Chair or Program Director, are not required. When possible, at least one letter should be authored by a family physician.

Guidance for Applicants from Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: None noted.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: The Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors encourages applicants who are IMGs submit at least one letter from a physician who practices in the United States.

Research/Scholarly Activity

The Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors encourages applicants to Family Medicine who pursue research and scholarly activity to prioritize patient and community-oriented outcomes. Examples may include work with population health, quality improvement, community service, or leadership in organized medicine.

⁵ Who is required to submit letters? (Select all that apply): Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending); Department chair; Program director; Physician preceptor at an away rotation (e.g., program director, faculty); Other

⁶ Does your specialty have a specialty-specific standardized letter of evaluation or standardized letter of recommendation?: Yes; No

Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials

Specialty Recommendation

Supplemental application materials required? ⁷	No
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Additional Guidance: None noted.

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: In general, pre-interview communication should be confined to the application materials. Applicants may wish to notify programs of major updates to their application materials that occur after the initial application is available for review, but they should understand the Family Medicine program may not respond.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: In general, post-interview communication is discouraged unless it is a specific follow-up question from the interview or an update to an application. Applicants wishing to send thank-you notes are welcome to do so, but they should understand the Family Medicine program may not respond. Applicants are discouraged from sending letters of interest or intent to rank.

Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	–
Typical interview offer window	October 2026 - January 2027
Interview scheduling platform	Thalamus Core
Interview format ⁸	Hybrid (an applicant chooses either an in-person or virtual interview format)

⁷ Does the specialty require applicants to submit supplemental application materials (e.g., use of other assessments, supplemental videos or essays)? Yes; No

⁸ Which interview format does the specialty recommend that programs use?: Virtual; In-person; Hybrid (an applicant chooses either an in-person or virtual interview format); Hybrid (an applicant completes both virtual and in-person interviews)

Additional Guidance: Programs release initial interview invitations no sooner than 1 week after applications are available to programs to allow for mission-aligned application review. Individual Family Medicine programs may host interviews that are virtual or in-person. Some programs may choose to offer both. Options should be clearly communicated on their website or informational materials. Programs should not make their ranking dependent on an in-person interview or visit.

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: Family medicine programs may offer virtual open houses or program-sponsored information sessions. They should limit them to one which is recorded and subsequently available to all applicants. Applicant attendance at open houses is optional and should never be used as a signal of an applicant's interest in a program. Programs should not track, document, or consider attendance – or non-attendance – in their evaluation or ranking of applicants.

Second Looks: Second Look visits are optional in-person opportunities for applicants to revisit programs after interviews have concluded. They are intended solely to help applicants gather information to inform their own rank list decisions. Attending a second look – or any program-sponsored event – is not necessary to express interest in a program and should carry no weight in how a program ranks an applicant. Programs should make this expectation explicit to applicants and ensure it is reflected in their internal ranking processes. Applicants are encouraged to be selective. Second Looks are most valuable when narrowing a small number of genuinely competitive choices. Visiting more than a few programs is rarely advisable.

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

Match Platform

Family Medicine participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

Additional Guidance: None noted.