

Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

Transitional Year

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 Transitional Year 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	No specialty guidance
Number of away rotations in the specialty	–

Additional Guidance: None noted.

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: It is recommended that USMLE/COMLEX scores be submitted by the initial application deadline.

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 applications ³	No specialty guidance
Application materials accepted after the deadline ⁴	No specialty guidance

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	12
Signal home institutions?	Yes
Signal programs where they completed away rotations?	Yes

Additional Guidance: Transitional Year Residency Programs agree with AAMC guidelines in Signaling. Applicants should signal the programs they are most interested in so that all participating programs receive consistent information about their level of interest. Individual program policies may vary.

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

Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
Required number of LORs	At least 3
Required letter writers⁵	Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending), Faculty preceptor from an inpatient core rotation that can speak to the candidate's clinical acumen
Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter?⁶	No

Additional Guidance: One letter should be written by a faculty preceptor from an inpatient core rotation that can speak to the candidate's clinical acumen. In addition, minimally one letter should be targeting their advanced program specialties. All letters will be reviewed by Transitional Year Residency Programs.

Guidance for Applicants from Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: One letter should be written by a faculty preceptor from an inpatient core rotation that can speak to the candidate's clinical acumen. In addition, minimally one letter should be targeting their advanced program specialties. All letters will be reviewed by Transitional Year Residency Programs.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: Transitional Year specialty requirements for letters of recommendation for IMG applicants are the same as for non-IMG applicants.

Research/Scholarly Activity

- a. Although Transitional Year Residency Programs' view in the importance of research or scholarly work aligns with those of the advanced programs, the Transitional Year Residency training prioritizes development of clinical acumen, professionalism, interpersonal communication skills, adaptability to the complex healthcare delivery systems and readiness for advanced training across different specialties.
- b. Transitional Year Residency Programs value the research or scholarly activities that demonstrate the applicants' academic curiosity, knowledge and skills in clinical research and/or quality improvement projects, enthusiasm in teaching and curriculum development, advocacy efforts such as involvement in resolution or policy development, and community-based initiatives, especially those demonstrating impact on patient care delivery. While these achievements are meaningful and assist in identifying competitive candidates, they should

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

not be at the expense of strong clinical training and proper development of clinical acumen as a medical student.

- c. Transitional Year Residency Programs consider involvement in QIPS projects, advocacy in healthcare policies, community service initiatives, leadership capstone projects equally valuable.

Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials required? ⁷	No specialty guidance

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: All Transitional Year Residency Programs are expected to follow NRMP recommendations and remain equitable and professional during pre-interview communications with the applicants.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: All Transitional Year Residency Programs are expected to follow NRMP recommendations and remain equitable and professional during post-interview communications with the applicants.

Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	No specialty guidance
Typical interview offer window	No specialty guidance
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format ⁸	Virtual

Additional Guidance: None noted.

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)

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: All Transitional Year Residency Programs are expected to follow NRMP recommendations, provide truthful and realistic information and remain equitable to all applicants throughout the recruitment process when considering and arranging Open Houses.

Second Looks: All Transitional Year Residency Programs are expected to follow NRMP recommendations and remain equitable to all applicants throughout the recruitment process when considering and coordinating Second Looks. Second Look should be solely informational, and applicant-driven. Programs should implement bias mitigating recruitment strategies and share them with all applicants. One example may be designating individuals that are not program leadership of the host program to engage with candidates during Second Looks. The specifics regarding implementation are deferred to the individual Transitional Year Residency Programs.

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

Match Platform

Transitional Year participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

Additional Guidance: None noted.