

Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

Emergency 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 Emergency 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.

Table of Contents

Specialty-Specific Resources.....	2
Away Rotations.....	2
Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores.....	2
Application Process	3
Program Signals	4
Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation	4
Research/Scholarly Activity	5
Supplemental Information.....	5
Applicant Communications	5
Interviews.....	6
Open Houses / Second Looks	6
Match Platform.....	6

Specialty Guidance for the 2026–2027 Cycle

Specialty-Specific Resources

Emergency Medicine has published a statement:

- <https://www.cordem.org/resource/medical-student-and-advisor-resources/>
- <https://www.emra.org/msag>

Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
Away rotations in the specialty¹	Strongly Recommended Purpose: important to being considered, but not always required given certain circumstances
Number of away rotations in the specialty	At least 1, No more than 2

Additional Guidance: Prior to planning your application strategy for away rotations, we strongly recommend you meet with a specialty-specific advisor to discuss your planned course. If you do not have access to a specialty-specific advisor, you can utilize the CORD distance advising service via distanceadvising@cordjobboard.com.

The Emergency Medicine Residents' Association and the Council of Residency Directors in Emergency Medicine have resources available to help:

- <https://www.cordem.org/resource/medical-student-and-advisor-resources/>
- <https://www.emra.org/msag>
- <https://www.cordem.org/wp-content/uploads/vsas-document-1-1.pdf>

Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores

License Exam Details	Specialty Recommendation
USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?²	No specialty guidance

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

Additional Guidance: Program director surveys suggest that there may be an advantage to DO applicants in including at least USMLE Step 2 scores in addition to COMLEX-2. However, this has a high degree of variability between programs. It is recommended that applicants check individual program requirements.

Application Process

Application Process Details	Specialty Recommendation
Main Residency Match Season	ResidencyCAS
Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP)	ResidencyCAS
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"> • Letters of recommendation: Program preference on this will vary and applicants should confirm specific requirements for each program. • USMLE Step 2 CK or COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE transcripts: Program preference on this will vary and applicants should confirm specific requirements for each program.

Additional Guidance: It is strongly recommended that applicants have 1 eSLOE uploaded to their application prior to application release date. Additional SLOEs can be submitted after the application release date, although program preference may vary as to whether programs will accept additional SLOEs after an interview. Program preference also varies as to whether applicants must have a USMLE Step 2/COMLEX Level 2 in order to be extended an interview offer. Applicants should confirm these details with individual programs to which they apply.

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

Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	5
Signal home institutions?	No
Signal programs where they completed away rotations?	No

Additional Guidance: It is recommended that applicants do NOT signal home or away/visiting rotations.

Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
Required number of LORs	At least 3, No more than 4
Required letter writers ⁵	It is strongly recommended that an applicant have a minimum of 1 eSLOE or other accepted letter format from an Emergency Medicine rotation
Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter? ⁶	Yes
Specialty-specific standardized letter required? ⁷	Recommended

Additional Guidance: It is strongly recommended that an applicant submit 1 eSLOE from an Emergency Medicine rotation with a strong recommendation for a second eSLOE from a different Emergency Medicine rotation.

Guidance for Applicants from Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: It is strongly recommended that applicants from Transitional Year/Preliminary programs submit a letter from their current program director as well as a letter from an Emergency Medicine program director, clerkship director, or other representative faculty with whom you have worked clinically who can attest to your clinical skills.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: None, see recommendations above.

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

⁷ If yes, is the specialty-specific standardized letter of evaluation recommended or required?: Recommended; Required

Research/Scholarly Activity

Emergency Medicine values well-rounded applicants and so research or other forms of scholarly work will strengthen your application. Research or scholarly work does not have to be EM-related and can be any of a broad array of formats so we encourage you to discuss this further with your specialty-specific advisor. Volume of research experience is not generally very influential in determining the competitiveness of a candidate. However, this will vary from program to program. Programs with prominent research efforts may place more emphasis on research and publications. Four-year residency programs often place a greater emphasis on research and scholarly work compared to three-year programs.

It is important to note that most candidates who successfully match into EM have at least one research experience, and an average of 2, though not all of this research pertains to EM. Many EM programs also value leadership experience and community engagement and will accept these experiences in lieu of research.

Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials required? ⁸	No

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: There is no requirement nor suggestion that letters of interest outside of the ResidencyCAS application be sent to programs. There may be a few specific situations where one might be recommended; applicants are advised to speak to a specialty-specific advisor before sending communication.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: There is no requirement nor suggestion that post-interview communication be sent to programs. Many program directors will provide specific guidance regarding how they will or will not respond to post-interview communication. If questions about a program arise, students are encouraged to reach out to that program for clarification regarding details of the program or their interview experience.

⁸ Does the specialty require applicants to submit supplemental application materials (e.g., use of other assessments, supplemental videos or essays)? Yes; No

Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	–
Typical interview offer window	September 2026 - January 2027
Interview scheduling platform	ResidencyCAS
Interview format ⁹	Virtual

Additional Guidance: There is variability in which interview platforms and what structure of interviews will be offered from Emergency Medicine residency programs. It is recommended that applicants check the specific details and requirements for each program to which they apply.

<https://www.emra.org/msag>

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: Timing and format of program Open Houses will vary program-to-program. Most programs will provide details of these events via social media, email, or on their website.

Second Looks: It is recommended to programs that if they offer an in-person second look, that this take place after program rank lists have been submitted or that programs ensure that second looks do not involve program leadership or other faculty involved with rank list determination. This will vary program-to-program.

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

Match Platform

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

Additional Guidance: None noted.

⁹ 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)