



Guidelines for Shadowing Experiences & Clinical Mentorship

Why Shadowing?

Shadowing provides a glimpse into the day-to-day responsibilities of a health professional. It can help you start to learn about specialties of interest, provide insight into provider-patient communication, prove to admissions committees that you know what you're getting yourself into, and keep you motivated toward your profession. You will get a sense of *what it's like* to be a physician, dentist, or other health care professional by observing how they:

- organize the day
- allow time for the unexpected
- stay current in the profession
- address uncertainty
- integrate their personal and professional lives
- Interact with their colleagues and patients

Most professionals appreciate the opportunity to reflect and teach, and conversations about the above topics with the person you are shadowing can add great value to your experience. Consider these [informational interview questions](#) to guide your time and interaction with your mentor(s). There is also much to learn from patients and their families; effective healthcare professionals are curious, life-long learners and know that patients and families are important teachers.

Identify Potential Professionals to Shadow

- Start with your and your family members' providers—they already know you!
- Use family and friend connections (congregation members, coaches, high school teachers, parents of kids you babysat, anyone who has seen you in a professional role who could confidently refer you to health professionals they know).
- Ask peers who have had positive shadowing experiences—reach out to individuals they have shadowed.
- Utilize the [Midd2Midd](#) platform.
- Use [Handshake](#), the Middlebury College Center for Careers and Internships job and internship platform.
- When negotiating internship or research opportunities, inquire about the possibility of shadowing.

Introduce Yourself Professionally

- To establish the first connection, call the office or send an e-mail.
- Start with a brief introduction, then describe how you found them and what you hope to learn from them. Be specific about why their work interests you.
- Attach a résumé if you've connected by e-mail. If you call, have your calendar ready in case they can schedule you immediately.

Prepare for Your Experience

- Be sure you know where to go, what to wear, and what other expectations they may have of you.
- [Review AAMC Guidelines for Clinical Shadowing Experiences](#)
- Map your route to the site so you can arrive on time.

Prepare for What You Will Learn

Keep a journal of your experiences and reflections. Journaling is not only a way to record facts and feelings, but also is an important step in becoming a reflective provider. Be observant during each interaction to learn about:

- The patient's illness
- What may be happening in the patient's life that may have relevance to their medical/dental issue
- The provider-patient relationship
- The amount of time spent with the patient and how that affects the interaction/dynamic
- Active listening
- The provider's reasoning and decision-making process

Recommendations for a Safe and Successful Experience

Students should agree to the terms of their mentorship at the outset and should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Students should establish hours when they can be available and be reliable and dependable during those times. If a schedule conflict arises, they should provide adequate notice.
- Students and mentors should adhere to widely accepted business hours for correspondence.
- Students should not work/volunteer with mentors outside of established clinical spaces (hospitals, private practices, clinics, pop-up clinics) except where they are working in pairs and their whereabouts are known to others.
- Trust your instincts if an experience makes you feel threatened or uncomfortable. The [Health Professions Office](#) can be a resource to discuss such a situation.

****Consider talking through these guidelines with the person(s) you are shadowing so that you can create shared goals and establish clear expectations.****