



# VIRTUAL RESIDENCY INTERVIEWS

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# GOALS OF THE INTERVIEW



# Purpose of Interview - Program Director Perspective:

*Overall: Determine if you are a good fit for their program and whether you will succeed in their program*

- Do you have good interpersonal and communication skills? To assess how you will interact with patients and colleagues*
- Are you ethical, accountable, reliable? Do you manage your time well and are responsible? To assess your professionalism*
- Do you respect patients, have sound judgement based on best practices, and are a team player? To assess your ability to provide patient care*
- Are you committed to growth and willing to work hard? Do you demonstrate humility and integrity? To assess your character*

# Purpose of Interview - Applicant Perspective:

- To **find the best fit** between you and a program
  - *Compare your options*
  - *Would you be happy there?*
  - *Will the program help you achieve your career goals?*
  - *Opportunity to present your best self and ultimately.....Match*

# Main objectives for the interview

- Determine how well the program meets your goals and preferences
- Demonstrate your compatibility with the program's culture
- Assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the program, with the goal of creating a solid rank order list
- The NRMP Program Rating and Interview Scheduling Manager (PRISM<sup>®</sup>) mobile app lets you track and rate programs and is available for [iPhone](#) and [Android](#) platforms

# The Experience

- Most residency interviews are pleasant experiences. Programs want you to learn about them as much as they want to learn about you.
- Typically 20-30 minutes, but may be only 10-15 minutes with PD
- Can vary in difficulty
- Be prepared to answer questions about issues in your record
- Students who interview poorly, do so because of
  - *Preparing inadequately*
  - *Providing inappropriate or inconsistent answers to the questions asked*
  - *Displaying a discouraging, condescending, abrasive, or defensive mood*
  - *Seeming flat, nervous, or uninterested*
  - *Using inappropriate humor*
  - *Saying disparaging remarks about other people or programs*
  - *Rambling on or otherwise providing incoherent answers*
  - *Lack of confidence*

# INTERVIEW PREPARATION



# Preparing for Virtual Interviews

- Approach virtual interviews with the same formality as you would for an in-person interview
- Be prepared for common questions
- **KNOW your application!** - Thoroughly and critically review all elements of your application: transcript, CV, personal statement, clerkship narratives, and MSPE



# Be prepared to answer “Tell me about yourself...” with a brief narrative that may answer

- Who you are
- Why this specialty
- What are your interests
- What are your core values
- How you may have evolved

# Be prepared to discuss your career goals

- You can be general but not vague. In 1-2 sentences be able to articulate your plans for after residency
  - *Will you be practicing clinically?*
  - *Are you considering additional training?*
  - *Would you like to engage in teaching or research?*
  - *Do you plan to work in a particular community or serve a specific population?*
- If you indicated an interest in research in your personal statement be able to discuss what kind of future research topics you may be interested in conducting during residency and beyond
- It can be opportunity to discuss your past experiences and accomplishments in relation to your future plans

# Be prepared to address issues in your application

- *Do not be defensive, remember you have been invited for an interview so you already meet their qualifications*
- *Practice a response to “Why did you get honors in everything except...  
“ OR “why do you think you got a pass in ...”*
- *Your answer should demonstrate: maturity, reflection, growth, accountability and overall be positive*
- *Your answer needs to show that you want to continuously improve*
- *Avoid blame or excuses, that is a red flag for PD’s because it can indicate an inability to receive or incorporate feedback in the future*
- *Do not use poor testing or conflict with preceptor as a reason*

# Behavioral Interview Questions

- Allow the interviewer to explore your past performance in these areas
- Typically begins with: Tell me about a time when.....
  - *You worked effectively under pressure*
  - *Had to a conflict with a team member and how you handled it*
- STAR approach
  - ***Situation/Task*** – the situation in which you acted. What was the context? Why?
  - ***Action*** – the action you took in the situation. What did you do (or not do)? How did you do it?
  - ***Results*** – what happened as a result of the action you took? What was the effect of your Action (or inaction)?

# Tips from Mock Interviewers

- Review current innovations and challenges in the specialty you are pursuing in order to have a meaningful conversation about the specialty
- Expand your prior knowledge about health policy, health care delivery, health care systems to able to discuss current issues. Consider Ted talks, NY times, US News, Kaiser Family Foundation ([www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org))
- Be able to discuss your research with ease, consider reviewing each project and develop a brief summary for yourself. Regardless of your role in the project it is expected that you are able to do this
- Avoid the use of fillers: um, uh, like, sure, so, sorta, kinda

# Tips from Mock Interviewers

- Your interviews may be variable and some interviewers may not ask difficult questions or delve into your record, while others may be more rigorous
- Build a rapport not a friendship
- Remember to appear interested, smile if appropriate, make eye contact, and look confident
- LISTEN... if the interviewer discusses aspects of the program, their role, or other topics develop a rapport by showing interest and asking follow up questions

# Off limit questions

- NRMP has mandated that programs not ask an applicant
  - *to disclose the names, specialties, geographic location, or other identifying information about programs to which the applicant has or may apply.*
  - *about age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and family status, and shall ensure that communication with applicants remains focused on the applicant's goodness of fit within their programs.*
  - *shall not require them or imply that second interviews or visits are used in determining applicant placement on a rank order list.*

# Off limit questions

- Programs are not allowed to ask questions about how many, which, or types of programs you have applied to, it is a match violation.
  - *One suggestion is to avoid answering this question and perhaps redirect your answer to the program your interviewing at. For example, something like “I am so excited about this program and have applied here because of A, B, & C .”*
- If an off limit question is asked, you are not required to answer unless you feel comfortable doing so. If you are uncomfortable, try to deflect and redirect to something relevant and reiterate your commitment and interest in the program.
- You can report match violations at [policy@nrmp.org](mailto:policy@nrmp.org). We are also happy to help you develop alternative responses if you have a specific concern.



# INTERVIEW LOGISTICS



# Interview Scheduling

- Generally take place November through January, with some starting in October and others occurring in February.
- You can be contacted via any method!
- Respond immediately to interview offers
- If possible, schedule interviews for programs you are most excited about in the middle of your interview calendar
- Sometimes interview dates will conflict with one another
- As you accept early interviews, know that you can always cancel later if you are offered more than you can reasonably attend, or receive invitations to programs for which you have a greater interest
- Some competitive specialties may only offer one interview date, as they only allow for 2-4 interview days per season

# Interview Scheduling

- Respond promptly to any required pre-interview or supplemental application components, as required by specific programs
- Research programs and salient characteristics
  - Programs may send you digital program materials
  - Review program websites
- Live or Asynchronous
  - Live: uses real-time video conferencing to connect you with an interviewer
  - Asynchronous: record your responses via webcam, to be shared with reviewers at a later time
- Video platform being used
- Number of interviewers
- Interview length: can be variable

# Important!

- Before cancelling interviews, please reach out to us to discuss, so that we may help you develop a strategy and provide guidance.

# Before the interview

- Be prepared to ask questions. Avoid questions answered on program websites
- Prepare your interview location and test technology well before your interviews. Make sure:
  - *You have a reliable and stable internet connection*
  - *Your computer or tablet has a good quality webcam and microphone*
  - *If possible, use a computer or tablet instead of a mobile phone*
  - *Your interview environment is private, well-lit, quiet, free from distractions, and is located where you can control the background noise (no public spaces)*
  - *Identify a backup plan if technology fails*

# Day of Interview

- Be well-rested and focused
- Present yourself well – conservative attire is a safe bet (dark solid colors suits, blazers)
- Test your technology prior to logging into the interview
  - Shut down other computer programs so that no alerts or notifications will disrupt you
  - Camera, microphone, and internet connection are working properly
  - Your device is fully charged, ideally plugged into a socket
- Have relevant interviews materials in front of you for easy reference
- Arrive to the interview 5 minutes early
- Treat everyone you meet with respect and kindness
- Make notes of your impressions after the interview –
  - details will start to blur as you complete more interviews
  - can also help you with personalizing your thank you notes

# Present a Great Impression on a Video Interview

- Look into the camera when speaking. This improves the perception of eye contact
- Angle the camera slightly downward
- Avoid watching yourself when speaking – close the self-view window if necessary
- Sit still, lean forward, and keep hands still
- Rely on facial reactions, instead of distracting hand gestures. Use exaggerated face and body animations to better communicate in the virtual environment
- Speak slower than normal. Take your time to provide thoughtful responses
- Smile...

# Make Your Environment Look Good

- Have adequate lighting
- Select a neutral background and space that is uncluttered
- Notes should be within easy reach and limit the sound of paper shuffling
- Top 10 tips and tricks for a zoom meeting  
[https://youtu.be/O7H\\_XjPtT2o](https://youtu.be/O7H_XjPtT2o)



# After the interview

- NRMP discourages post interview communication, “programs shall not solicit or require post-interview communication from applicants, nor shall program directors engage in post-interview communication that is disingenuous for the purpose of influencing applicants’ ranking preferences.”
- Thank you notes
- Updates to applications
- Second looks
- Letter of Intent

# Next Steps

- Review materials in CUNY School of Medicine Career Advising site <https://www.cuny.cuny.edu/csom/interview-preparation-materials>
- Mandatory mock interviews will be conducted
  - *Interviewer will be provided with your primary specialty, CV, Draft MSPE with grades/narratives, draft personal statement*
  - *Will last approximately 20-25 minutes, with 5-10 minutes for real-time feedback*
  - *Assess: interpersonal skills, appearance, communication skills*
  - *Debrief*
  - *Possible 2<sup>nd</sup> mock if needed*

# Additional Resources

- *[Six tips for looking great in a zoom meeting](https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2020/04/11/zoom-meetings-go-better-these-6-tips-look-your-best/5125980002/)*

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- *[How to look good on Camera](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/style/tom-ford-video-chat-tips.html)*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/style/tom-ford-video-chat-tips.html>

- *[Do and Don't's of online meetings](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/25/technology/personaltech/online-video-meetings-etiquette-virus.html)*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/25/technology/personaltech/online-video-meetings-etiquette-virus.html>