

HOW TO BE A

Family Medicine Ambassador



A handbook from the
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Inspiring the Next Generation of Family Physicians

44,000+

Number of primary care physicians still needed throughout the United States

Family physicians provide primary care in more communities than any other medical specialty. With so many areas across the U.S. underserved by health care, there is an urgent need for more primary care physicians.

Working to grow family medicine is an important and necessary effort family physicians can undertake to increase the primary care workforce and improve access to care – especially for minority and medically underserved communities. Health equity in the United States can only be achieved through a strong foundation of primary care.

Here is where we need your passion and expertise for family medicine. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) is seeking your help to strengthen the specialty and inspire the next generation of family physicians.

HOSA – Future Health Professionals

HOSA – Future Health Professionals (formerly known as Health Occupations Students of America) is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a career and technical student organization. The organization includes a national network of school-based student organizations in which middle school, high school, college, and other postsecondary students explore health professions.

The AAFP and HOSA are working together to support student exploration of family medicine careers. A new program pairs HOSA high school and college students with AAFP physician members and AAFP medical student members (i.e., family medicine ambassadors) to learn about family physician career pathways and connect them with the specialty on a personal level.

Students who participate in this program are expected to:



Conduct research



Interview a family physician and medical student



Present learnings to student peers



Present to HOSA judges

This handbook introduces you to becoming a family medicine ambassador. It provides facts, tips, talking points, and resources to complement your stories and helps you share your passion and expertise with students.

Preparing to be a Family Medicine Ambassador

This list of do's and don'ts can help you be a better family medicine ambassador and spread a shared vision for a positive future for family medicine.

Do Be Yourself

Personal stories will resonate with students. Be honest about the joys and challenges of life as a family physician.

Help students see the challenges as part of the path to family medicine, not a deterrent from the path to family medicine.

Share not only what you do but why you do it.

Share the impact you and your colleagues have on your patients and your community.

Do Start the Conversation with Questions

Learn as much as you can about the student before you share your story.

Don't Force Expertise

Seek answers together with the student. If you don't know something, tell the student you'll get back to them and seek answers from the AAFP, your AAFP chapter, or other respected colleagues.

Do Prepare to Address Myths about Family Medicine

Think of the myths about the specialty and how you would provide insight. Try not to be defensive. Instead, show them why you are proud to be a family physician.

Don't Lecture...Instead, Inquire

Learn about the student interviewing you. You never know what information they may share about themselves that you could connect as a suitable trait for family medicine.

Do Know your Family Medicine Network

If you interact with a student who has a keen interest in sports, share your connections with fellow family physicians who specialize in sports medicine.

Follow the do's and don'ts here and formulate answers for these common questions from students:

- What are your favorite and least favorite parts of your job?
- What are you excited about for the future of family medicine? What issues concern you?
- What makes a great day in family medicine?
- How did your training prepare you for what you have done in your career?
- What drew you to medicine? What drew you to family medicine?
- What is unique about your educational and career path? What are some other paths you've seen?
- What does it mean to your family that you're a family physician? What does it mean to your community?

Being a Family Medicine Ambassador

By serving as a family medicine ambassador, you will inspire students with your passion for family medicine as you show them the importance of family medicine and help them discover if it is the right career path for them.

Tips to Inspire Students



Describe the aspects of family medicine that reflect your passion for the specialty and communicate a positive vision for the future.



Connect students with resources, references, organizations and affinity groups, or other groups that can support them on their educational and career paths.



Discover students' passion and connect them to family medicine by encouraging their curiosity in family medicine careers.



Describe family medicine work and lifestyle, including your experience and what they can expect on their journey.



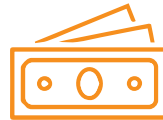
Share your joy in practicing medicine and personal fulfillment through your educational and career journey.



Describe the impact of primary care in communities to better recruit and champion family medicine.



Ask important questions to learn about students' journeys.



Help students understand the important financial considerations of pursuing medical education and a career in family medicine.



Describe the crucial role family medicine plays in achieving health equity.



Describe the broad scope of practice, specialized pathways, and various practice settings of family medicine.



Teaching Students about Family Medicine

Researching careers and conducting interviews with family physicians and medical students will help familiarize students with family medicine. The learning objectives below include facts, talking points, and tips that can help guide students in interviews with you.

Demand and Occupational Outlook

HOSA students will discover the immense demand for family physicians in many communities and learn that now is the time to consider this career path.

- **Fun fact:** Family medicine has been the most recruited medical specialty (i.e., more job offers than any other medical specialty) for 13 years in a row.
- **Talking point:** Family physicians practice in more communities and provide more care for underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty.
- **Pro tip:** Since everyone needs primary care, family physicians can practice virtually anywhere. They don't have to practice only in large cities. In fact, many enjoy practicing in small and/or rural communities.

Medical Education and Career Options

HOSA students will learn about medical school and residency requirements and additional training options like combined-specialty programs, fellowships, and Certificates of Added Qualification. They will learn about the various practice settings and emphases available in family medicine.

- **Fun fact:** When medical students train in family medicine, they learn to treat patients of all ages and sexes and address medical conditions from every organ system. When family physicians graduate residency, they can deliver babies, provide newborn, child, adolescent, adult, and geriatric health care, provide mental and behavioral health care, perform an array of medical procedures, and manage chronic and acute medical conditions.
- **Talking point:** Family physicians can evolve their practice throughout their careers based on the populations they wish to serve. Some family physicians focus on specific patient populations or health conditions, such as surgical obstetrics, pediatrics, geriatrics, gender-affirming care, sports medicine, and addiction medicine – to name a few.

- **Pro tip:** Ask students if they understand the meaning of these populations and health conditions. Help them understand health care jargon and explain the meaning of complex terminology.

Work, Lifestyle, and Financial Considerations

HOSA students will learn about the benefits and challenges of being a family physician, the critical role family physicians serve on a health care team (and working with other health care professionals and specialists), the family physician's lifestyle, and the profession's work-life balance. Students will gain knowledge and insight about the cost of medical education, scholarship and loan forgiveness opportunities, and average salaries and bonuses typically earned in a family medicine career.

- **Fun fact:** There are more scholarships and loan repayment opportunities in family medicine than in any other medical specialty because family physicians are in demand throughout the United States.
- **Talking point:** While medical student debt is higher than ever, so are family physician salaries.
- **Pro tip:** Family physicians are not the only health care team members who provide primary care. Help students understand the difference between family medicine and other primary care health professionals and why patients need the whole team for care.

Importance of Primary Care and Preventive Medicine to Achieve Health Equity

HOSA students will identify the role family physicians play in primary care and preventive health and the impact family medicine has on patients, families, and communities. They will describe the role of family physicians as advocates for their patients and communities, including how family physicians are leaders in addressing health disparities and achieving health equity for all.

Teaching Students About Family Medicine, continued

- **Fun fact:** Technology and consumer behavior will shape how medicine is practiced now and in the future. High-quality primary care is, and will remain, essential to a health care system that provides value and improves health and health equity.
- **Talking point:** Family physicians are leaders in communities and influence government and policy development.
- **Pro tip:** Share your knowledge and experiences about the importance of being a strong advocate for family medicine. The AAFP has numerous resources to learn and share [information about issues, such as health equity, that are important to family physicians](#).

Exploring Family Medicine

Discovering your ‘WHY’ of Family Medicine

Through interviews with family physicians and medical students, HOSA students will be asked to tell the story of ‘WHY’ the people they interviewed chose their career path. HOSA students are encouraged and expected to ask questions to elicit emotion and discover their interviewee’s ‘WHY.’

After your interview, a HOSA student should be able to explain ‘WHY’ this career might be a good fit for them. It is also acceptable for them to explain why this career might not be a good fit. You may want to ask them about the things they learned that most intrigue them. Or is there any aspect of family medicine that has piqued their interest, such as serving patients who are underrepresented in health care?

Advocating for the Underrepresented in Medicine (URM)

As a family medicine ambassador, you’ll connect with students from different racial, ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic backgrounds. The students’ communities may have been historically or currently disadvantaged and underserved by the health care and educational systems. They may not see many physicians who look like them or have similar backgrounds. They may have experienced discrimination from health care providers or felt as though their gender or sexual preference is not considered in their health care. These experiences could make a student feel as if a career in medicine is not a good fit, unattainable, or they are unlikely to succeed.

Be prepared to be answer questions from students who think medicine isn’t right for them because they don’t have the same advantages as others. While you might not always personally relate, identify someone in your family medicine network who might inspire or connect to a student. You can share articles, podcasts, videos, and other information where they see a lot of diversity or physicians who have overcome adversity to become great family medicine role models. The resources to the right can assist you in these conversations.

RESOURCES

- [Family Doc Focus](#) highlights diverse doctors who are members of the LGBTQ+ community, practice medicine with disabilities, and more.
- Listen and promote the podcast [Underrepresented in Medicine Journey to Academic Medicine \(URM JAM\)](#), available through the Society for Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM).
- The EveryOne Project focuses on [underrepresented health providers in medicine and promoting workforce diversity](#).

Exploring Resources

The AAFP has compiled videos and articles covering the basics of medicine’s most limitless specialty – family medicine. Use these resources as you prepare for interviews with HOSA students. These resources are also available to the students.

[Access resources](#)



Connecting with Family Medicine on Social Media

Promote Family Medicine on Social Media



@AAFP



@familymed



@the_aafp

Rose Marie Leslie, MD

TikTok: @drleslie

Family physician and one of the most influential physicians on social media

Humans of Family Medicine

Twitter: @humansoffamilymedicine

Shared stories of family medicine and physicians who are passionate about their patients and the specialty

Brittani James, MD

Twitter: @DrBrittaniJ

Family physician, physician activist, and antiracism educator with more than 24,000 followers on Twitter

Jay W. Lee, MD, MPH, FAAFP

Twitter: @familydocwonk

Chief medical officer, former president of the California Academy of Family Physicians, and creator of **#FMRevolution**

Tochi Iroku-Malize, MD, MPH, MBA, FAAFP

Twitter: @tilimd

AAFP president-elect and co-host of the URM JAM Podcast making a difference by promoting health, education, and tolerance