

2024 SHADOWING PROGRAM GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to help you (medical students and volunteer physicians) optimize your shadowing experience.

NOTE FOR VOLUNTEER PHYSICIANS: Feel free to use these guidelines as a complement to your existing practice standards and/or guidelines.

SHADOWING PROGRAM PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

Both medical student participants and physician volunteers are required to review the "[Advice to the Profession: Medical practice observation experience](#)" provided by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA). Both parties are expected to understand and adhere to the CPSA's advice which describes the roles and expectations of the physician as well as the roles and limitations of an observer.

STUDENT:

- All student participants are expected to be enrolled in medicine at either the University of Alberta or Calgary
- Following shadowing placements, students are required to complete an online Shadowing Program assessment
- If applicable, the student is responsible for submitting their expenses (with receipts) within the month following their shadowing placement duration. Failure to do so may result in forfeiting their expense claims

PHYSICIAN:

- All physician volunteers are expected to be a CPSA and ACFP member in good standing
- Following shadowing placements, physicians will be asked to evaluate the Shadowing Program by completing an online Volunteer Shadowing Program assessment

CONTACT INFORMATION

Once a match is made, the ACFP office will forward contact information to **both** physician and student. **The student should contact the physician prior to the experience to arrange the date, time, and location for the initial meeting with the physician.** This can be done via email, video conference, or phone.

Shadowing relationships between supervising physicians and student participants are expected to remain professional and are not to exceed the duration of the Shadowing Program placement window.

If are unable to connect or require assistance concerning the Shadowing Program, please contact:

The Alberta College of Family Physicians

Phone: (780) 271-5359 | Fax: (780) 488-2396

Email: shadowing@acfp.ca

Website: www.acfp.ca/students

INITIAL MEETING

The purpose of the initial meeting is making introductions and allow the volunteer physician to say a few words about their practice. Students may want to indicate why they chose to participate in the Shadowing Program and what they hope to takeaway from the experience.

Other topics to consider discussing during the initial meeting include:

- **Terms and definitions** – discuss relevant terms and definitions regarding your Shadowing Program experience together. For example, ‘shadowing’, ‘office’, etc. Both parties discuss how they define relevant terms and adopt a common understanding for the placement
- **Shadowing expectations** – Discuss practical operations and expectations (e.g., clinic access (i.e., public transit, parking), hours of operation, lunch, etc.). Students are expected to dress in professional attire (i.e., business casual) unless otherwise specified
- **Confidentiality agreements** – If necessary, the physician/practice should prepare a confidentiality agreement and provide it to the student at the initial meeting
- **Placement schedule** – Discuss common availabilities for the placement to occur. Scheduling can vary and be any combination of mornings, afternoons, evening, and/or “on-call” opportunities. Scheduling preferences will be shared with matched Shadowing Program pairs; however, matched shifts are ultimately up to the supervising physician’s availability and discretion. Other arrangements/times may be suggested for the student’s consideration.
 - **Note:** Shadowing opportunities average between two to four shifts within the two-week timeframe and are encouraged to provide at least 16 hours of experience
- **Sensitivity and patient interaction/ experience/content warnings.** Consider that for many Shadowing Program students, this is their *first* exposure to the practice of medicine (even prior to school). Content warnings are statements made prior to witnessing potentially disturbing events during your Shadowing experience together. Examples of experiences that might warrant content warnings include:
 - **Graphic Medical Procedures:** surgeries, procedures, and treatments involving blood, bodily fluids, and/or tissue
 - **Patient Suffering:** Alerting students to the possibility of witnessing patients in severe physical and/or emotional pain/distress due to their medical condition, injury, or treatment
 - **Terminal Illness and End-of-Life Care:** Notifying students about encounters with terminally ill patient, discussions about end-of-life care, and the potential of witnessing death (if present)
 - **Physical Trauma:** Advising students about witnessing traumatic injuries resulting from accidents, violence, or natural disasters (which may include severe wounds, burns, and/or fractures, etc.)
 - **Psychological Distress:** Informing students about encountering patients with severe mental health conditions, including psychosis, suicidal ideation, and/or severe depression, which may involve emotional outbursts or distressing behaviours

- **Child or Elder Abuse:** Warning students about the possibility of encountering signs or discussions related to child or elder abuse, including physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- **Domestic Violence:** Alerting students to the potential for encountering patients who are victims of domestic violence or witnessing evidence of such abuse
- **Substance Abuse:** Advising students about encounters with patients struggling with substance abuse disorders, including intoxication, withdrawal symptoms, or drug-related complications
- **Traumatic Events:** Notifying students about the possibility of encountering patients who have experienced traumatic events such as accidents, assaults, or disasters, which may trigger emotional responses or flashbacks
- **Cultural and Religious Sensitivities:** Reminding students to be mindful of cultural and religious sensitivities that may affect patient interactions, including rituals, beliefs, or practices related to illness and death

Once shadowing dates have been selected, please confirm this information at: shadowing@acfp.ca.

SHADOWING AND OBSERVING

The on-site shadowing experience expectations should have been addressed during the initial meeting. Thus, your shadowing experience can focus on the following.

- **Establishing a professional dialogue protocol** – The physician and student should clarify appropriate opportunities for when the student can ask questions or seek clarification during the placement. For example, this may occur at a set time (perhaps 15-20 minutes at the start or end of each day) or an ad hoc basis (between appointments) at the physician's discretion

NOTE FOR STUDENTS: You are encouraged take notes about your experience **excluding personally identifying information**. Consider posing questions in an appropriate environment (e.g., not in the presence of patients), during the appropriate intervals (as discussed above)

- **Practice introductions** – Introduce the student to colleagues and/or support staff as necessary. If time permits, provide a **walkthrough** of the physical layout of the practice space – this can be done by the volunteer physician or another available, designated, team member

POTENTIAL SHADOWING EXPERIENCE GOALS

While there is no structured programming for the shadowing experience, the ACFP and the Sections of Family Medicine and Rural Medicine of the Alberta Medical Association strongly believe that offering exposures to family practice to medical students offers positive insight to why family medicine can be and ought to be considered as a first-choice specialty. The following areas relating to family practice are **suggested topics** that can be addressed during placements:

- **Family physician lifestyle:** balancing the physician's own health with work, holidays, shifts, community expectations, and other demands

- **Diversity of practice:** discuss available options to family practice (e.g., rural, urban, private practice, hospital privileges, community resource supports, etc.)
- **The value of longitudinal therapeutic relationships** (e.g., trusted patient-physician experience, cradle-to-grave care, complex care, Patient's Medical Home, etc.)
- **Working within Alberta's health care system** – partners, relationships, and models of team-based care (e.g., colleagues, specialists, interdisciplinary teams, Alberta Health Services, the ACFP, the Alberta Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, etc.)
- **Comprehensive care and options on selecting a continued area of competency** (e.g., obtaining additional certification in elderly care, obstetrics, sports medicine, emergency medicine, etc.)
- **Exploring other activities** such as teaching, research, administration, CME, liability issues, third-party contracts (WCB, insurance claims), and PCNs
- **Effective business management strategies** (e.g., overhead costs, staffing, business models, etc.)

RURAL SHADOWING PLACEMENTS AND EXPENSES

Expenses incurred during your rural placements are subject to approval by the ACFP and must adhere to its Travel and Expense Form Guidelines.

- The maximum number of days eligible for expense reimbursement for rural shadowing placements is four (unless previously arranged with the ACFP)
- If you choose a rural location and must travel to a town or city (more than 30km) outside of the cities of Calgary or Edmonton, costs associated with parking, travel, accommodation, and meals will be reimbursed. Suburban locations such as Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove or St. Albert are excluded as rural settings and will not be considered for expense reimbursement