**Career Planning for Residents**

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Introduction

Planning a career after residency can be a complicated and overwhelming process for residents, especially considering their demanding clinical responsibilities. The level of guidance and resources provided by residency programs may vary. This chapter aims to provide an overview of how residency programs can help residents plan their career strategy, self-assess their career goals and priorities, prepare required documents, and establish a timeline to ensure success.

Planning for Subspecialty Fellowship Training

Residents who are considering fellowship training in pediatric subspecialties should assure that they have adequate exposure to the field(s) of interest early in training to confirm their commitment to that path. Residents should seek out (or be paired with) a mentor from the intended field early in training and connect with the fellowship program director at the home institution if available. Residents who plan to pursue highly competitive fellowships or who desire to train at a highly selective institution should be advised during their intern year of the importance of participation in research or other relevant scholarly activity so they have time to prepare. If possible, consider supporting residents to attend a subspecialty conference to gain exposure and make external professional connections in the field.

Applications for fellowship typically require at least three letters of recommendation: a composite recommendation from the residency PD, another from a (preferably established/senior) physician in the chosen subspecialty who can evaluate the resident’s clinical performance in the field, and another from a faculty member who can speak to the resident’s academic potential. Some subspecialities (as of 2024, Pediatric Cardiology and Neonatology) may require a standard evaluation form in addition to letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation should be requested in the spring of PGY2 year so that letter writers have adequate notice to submit them in a timely way by early July in order for applications to be complete at the time that fellowships review candidate files.

Residents should be encouraged to ask trusted mentors or advisors to review their personal statements and advise on the application process. Schedule requests for third year should assure some flexibility (e.g. electives, vacation) during the interview season (late summer, early fall).

Understanding the Job Search Process and Developing a Timeline

Residents should have a comprehensive understanding of the steps involved in securing employment to be successful and avoid undue stress and anxiety. A well-structured career plan involves creating a personalized timeline and finding a mentor who can guide the resident through the process. A sample timeline for career planning is shown below and can help residents stay on track and make informed career decisions (Table 1). Highlighted areas will have additional information.

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| SAMPLE CAREER PLANNING TIMELINE FOR RESIDENTS (Table 1) |
| Months Prior to Graduation | Steps | Details |
| 18-24 mo | Determine Timeline | * Understand the timeline and variability based on visa status, clinical rotations, life circumstances, etc.
 |
|  |  | * Know when to start applying and plan time periods to interview during residency
 |
| 12-18 mo | Self-Reflection on Priorities | * Desired Practice Type (Private/academic) (hospital employee/single specialty/multi-specialty)
 |
|  |  | * Desired Practice Setting (Inpatient/Outpatient/Mix) (Urban/Rural)
 |
|  |  | * Desired location (patient population, needs of family, proximity to family, recreation, schools)
 |
|  |  | * Education, research, teaching, and leadership opportunities
 |
|  |  | * Compensation (Income guarantee, salary with productivity bonus)
 |
|  |  | * Availability of loan forgiveness or repayment programs
 |
|  |  | * Consider what you are willing to negotiate on
 |
|  |  | * Know your skills and personal worth
 |
|  |  | * Understand what employers are seeking in a candidate
 |
| 12-18mo | Build CV and Cover Letter  | * Build a Curriculum Vitae and cover letter.
* Identify and Obtain References
 |
| 9-12 mo | Strategies to Find Positions | * Job Boards: PedJobs, Practice Link, MD Search
* AAP Virtual Fairs
* AAP Career Opportunities Guide
* AAP local chapter job boards
* Networking
* Recruiters
 |
|  | Interview | * Scheduling the interview
 |
|  |  | * Preparation and practicing for the Interview
 |
|  |  | * Post interview communication
 |
|  | Contract | * Understanding components of a physician contract
 |
|  |  | * Evaluating and negotiating a contract
 |
|  |  | * Medical licensing and Credentialing process
 |

Building a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Cover Letter

Preparing for a job search involves creating important documents such as a CV and cover letter. A well-crafted CV and cover letter can greatly increase the chances of an applicant being contacted for an interview. Residents should receive guidance on how to construct a properly formatted CV that includes key elements and highlights their achievements to potential employers. Similarly, the cover letter should describe the applicant's relevant skills and experience as it pertains to the job they are applying for and should include the position they are applying for, as well as their connection to the area and practice. Table 2 provides information and educational resources related to preparing a cover letter and CV.

Soliciting Letters of Recommendation and References

When searching for a job, it is advisable for residents to start selecting and approaching their references early in the process. It is important to choose someone who knows the resident well and can speak about their character, work ethic, skills, and qualifications. In general, references should include the program director for any recently graduating/graduated resident. Residents should confirm preferred contact information and method for potential reference calls. Residents should directly ask each reference and inform them as soon as a letter is required to ensure that they have enough time to write the letter. After receiving confirmation, the resident should send an email request, including an updated CV.

Navigating the Interview Process

*Scheduling*

Residents often face challenges when trying to navigate interviews during their residency due to scheduling conflicts. To minimize the time away from their residency, it's essential that residents understand the importance of meeting rotation requirements and keep the time spent away from their residency to a minimum. One way to achieve this is to encourage residents to schedule interviews during their electives or vacation time.

*Interview Preparation and Follow-Up*

Preparing for interviews is crucial for residents and can be done by practicing with colleagues or mentors through mock interviews. It is important to note that interview formats can vary, and residents should be prepared for behavioral and situational questions in addition to traditional formats. They should also create a comprehensive list of questions to ask during the interview and be ready to discuss their professional goals, strengths, and expertise. Finally, it's important to identify the next steps and follow up accordingly. Table 2 includes information and tools on interviewing skills and sample questions to help residents prepare for a job interview.

Understanding the Contract

Physician employment contracts can often be complex and difficult for residents to comprehend. However, it is crucial for residents to have a clear understanding of the key components of their contracts, including their obligations, in order to establish a successful relationship with their employer. It is highly recommended that residency programs provide formal education to familiarize residents with contract terms and compensation models. Residents should be given an overview of benchmark data, billing processes, and how to identify fair benefits and compensation packages. Educational sessions should include information on terms such as productivity, restrictive covenants, liability insurance, and termination clauses. This will enable residents to identify any potential red flags in their employment contracts and avoid any negative impacts on their personal and professional lives. Resources for residents and program leaders can be found in Table 2.

Other Considerations

Residents should anticipate applying for a full medical license in the state of practice (for fellowship or any other employment) by six months in advance to assure they can assume clinical duties on time. Residents should be prepared for the credentialing process after signing the contract. This can also be quite onerous for busy residents but should be completed in a timely manner to avoid delays in starting post-residency employment. They should also be sure that their procedure logs are up to date in order to facilitate the credentialing process, especially if moving to a new institution.

Resources

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| SELECTED RESOURCES FOR RESIDENT MENTORS AND ADVISORS (Table 2) |
| Description | URL |
| AAP resource that includes questions to consider when looking for a job.  | * <https://www.aap.org/en/career-resources/planning-your-career/>
 |
| PedJobs allows residents to browse through opening available nationwide | * <https://jobs.pedjobs.org/jobseekers/>
 |
| This tool includes information on building your CV and cover letter | * <https://www.aap.org/en/career-resources/conducting-your-job-search/prepare-a-curriculum-vitae-and-cover-letter/>
 |
|  | * <https://www.ama-assn.org/medical-residents/transition-resident-attending/creating-standout-medical-cv>
 |
| Understanding your Contract  | * <https://www.ama-assn.org/medical-residents/transition-resident-attending/understanding-physician-employment-contracts>
 |
|  | * <https://resources.nejmcareercenter.org/article/physician-employment-contracts-strategies-for-avoiding-pitfalls/>
 |
| Credentialling Process | * <https://www.aap.org/en/career-resources/planning-your-career/credentialing/>
 |
| Salary expectations | * <https://www.aap.org/en/career-resources/planning-your-career/salary/>
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| Tips for interviewing | * <https://resources.nejmcareercenter.org/article/interviewing-skills-for-job-seeking-physicians/>
 |
|  | * <https://careers.jamanetwork.com/article/physician-interview-guide-what-you-must-ask>
 |
|  | * <https://www.aafp.org/pubs/fpm/issues/2001/0100/p38.html>
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Selected Resources

1. Bradley KE, McClain R, Berger JS, Andolsek KM. Successfully Navigating the Physician Job Interview. J Grad Med Educ. 2019 Oct;11(5):611-612.
2. Byerley J, Tilly A. A Simple Pyramid Model for Career Guidance. J Grad Med Educ. 2018 Oct;10(5):497-499.
3. Garcia RL, Windish DM, Rosenbaum JR. Resident career planning needs in internal medicine: a qualitative assessment. J Grad Med Educ. 2010 Dec;2(4):518-22.