

OU School of Community Medicine: Catalyst Shadowing Guide

Medicine is an exciting field with numerous career opportunities. Before deciding to apply to medical school, you should see if this could really be a career for you and also get some hours to sharpen up your medical school application. Shadowing can be a daunting process, and we are here to help. This resource serves as a detailed guide to help get you started, but it is certainly not exhaustive to opportunities! Please reach out if you have questions about the information in this guide or if we can be of assistance with anything else.

Best wishes on your journey into this noble career,

Your OU SCM Catalyst Team

General Information:

- **Start with people you already know**
 - Ask around:
 - Your own physician or other healthcare providers
 - Family and friends
 - Professors or academic advisors or local pre-health organizations
 - Alumni from your university
 - Physicians you have met through volunteering, work, or other activities
 - Other pre-medical or medical students, including your Catalyst mentor
 - A personal connection can help, but you do not need to know a physician personally to find an opportunity.
- **Cold calling or emailing clinics**
 - Look for physicians in specialties you are interested in and contact their clinic directly. Ask the office staff if the physician allows students to shadow and whether there is a process for arranging it.
 - Keep the message short:
 - Explain your role as a student, be kind and professional and be patient
 - Example script: “Hello, my name is [Name], and I am a pre-medical student at [School]. I am interested in learning more about [specialty] and was wondering whether Dr. [Name] might allow a student to shadow for a day or several clinic sessions. I understand that scheduling and patient privacy may limit opportunities, but I would appreciate any consideration or guidance.”

- Do not be discouraged by unanswered emails or rejections. Contact multiple physicians and offices.
- **Look beyond major hospitals systems**
 - Private practices, outpatient clinics, community hospitals, and smaller specialty groups can sometimes be easier to access than large academic medical centers.
 - Also consider shadowing:
 - Primary care physicians
 - Specialists
 - Surgeons
 - Hospitalists
 - Emergency physicians
 - Physicians practicing in rural communities
 - Seeing different environments is often more useful than spending all of your time in one specialty and provides plenty of stories to use in your application season!
- **Be prepared before you ask around**
 - Hospitals may require:
 - A copy of your resume
 - A copy of recent school transcript
 - Multiple references to be contacted on your behalf
 - Immunization documentation
 - TB testing or screening
 - Background checks
 - HIPAA/confidentiality training
 - Specific applications or onboarding
 - Requirements and availability can change, so always check the current program information before making plans.
 - It may take 4-6 months to find a site, get approved, complete trainings, and schedule dates.

Tulsa Metro Area Opportunities:

- **Saint Francis Hospital**
 - Volunteer Programs
 - Students age 15-18
 - minimum commitment of 4 hours a week AND a total of 7 weeks service for the summer is required to participate
 - Apply online at <https://www.saintfrancis.com/volunteers/student-opportunities>
 - Adult volunteers

- Apply online at <https://www.saintfrancis.com/volunteers/adult-opportunities>
- Work as a nurse technician/CNA at **Saint Francis**
 - Successful completion of a certified nurse aide (CNA) or patient care technician (PCT) training program
 - Completion of six (6) months medical assistant (MA) experience in a primary, specialty, or urgent care setting
 - Active enrollment in a collegiate nursing program with at least one (1) semester of clinicals complete
 - Successful completion of the Saint Francis Nurse Tech/Certified Nurse Assistant Training Program through Tulsa Tech
 - Find training sessions and the application online at <https://www.saintfrancis.com/careers/featured-careers/nurse-technician>
- **Ascension St. John**
 - Has student and college volunteer programs available
 - College students must agree to complete a minimum of 100 service hours
 - Must complete application at the following site: <https://healthcare.ascension.org/volunteer/oktul-tulsa-ok-ascension-st-john-medical-center-volunteer>
- **Hillcrest Medical Center**
 - Has a junior volunteer program and an adult volunteer program (18 years and older)
 - Information is located on both their website below
 - <https://hillcrest.com/volunteer/become-volunteer>
- The **University of Oklahoma School of Community Medicine** (located in Tulsa, OK),
 - Wait times for shadowing at OU Tulsa clinics may be longer than normal. Academic centers already have lots of people involved due to the presence of student doctors, resident doctors, and attending doctors.
 - Expect waiting approximately 6 months before applying
 - Find opportunities posted here: [OU SCM Visiting Student Page](#)
 - Bedlam Clinic is a good opportunity to shadow and see medical students in action at a wonderful community resource.
 - *[Ask your Catalyst mentor for more information.](#)*
 - The **University of Oklahoma School of Community Medicine** also offers a Summer Undergraduate Internship for college students
 - 6 weeks, full-time
 - Financial compensation of approximately \$750
 - Apply online at [OU SCM Summer Internship](#)
- **Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine**, our colleagues local to the Tulsa area, also can assist in opportunities

- As with OU, OSU is a teaching environment with medical students, residents, and other learners. Formal shadowing opportunities may therefore be limited.
- Similar to the OU Bedlam Clinic, the OSU Cura Clinic is a free community clinic run by student providers and may be amenable to undergraduate shadowing. Contact CuraSapulpaDirector@gmail.com for more information.
- OSU COM offers several opportunities for undergraduate students. Contact osucomrecruitment@okstate.edu for more information.

Oklahoma City Metro Area Opportunities

- **OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center**
 - OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center has a formal process for non-OU Health campus students seeking shadowing experience.
 - Students must be at least 18, have a designated preceptor before applying, and the shadow experience is limited to up to seven consecutive calendar days per academic semester.
 - Start here:
 - [OU Health Student Learners and Shadowing Information](#)
 - Again, because OU Health is a major academic medical center, physicians may already have medical students, residents, fellows, and other learners working with them. Having a specific physician or preceptor identified before applying is particularly important.
- **INTEGRIS Health**
 - INTEGRIS Health Baptist Medical Center Portland Avenue and other INTEGRIS facilities offer formal student shadowing programs.
 - For physician shadowing, INTEGRIS states that students first need approval from a physician willing to serve as their supervising physician. Students can use the physician directory to identify physicians by name or specialty and then contact the physician or office directly. Once a physician agrees, the formal request process can begin.
 - Start here: [INTEGRIS Health Student Shadowing Program](#)
- **Mercy**
 - Mercy has a formal Shadow/Observe process.
 - Students must first find a Mercy caregiver willing to serve as their preceptor and arrange dates before submitting the application. Mercy requires applications and supporting documentation to be completed in advance, and shadow experiences are generally limited to 40 hours or less within one year.
 - Start here: [Mercy Shadow/Observe Program](#)
- **SSM Health St. Anthony**
 - Contact their volunteer department for formal opportunities for volunteering.

- <https://www.ssmhealth.com/volunteer>
- Look for physicians or specialties that interest you and contact the relevant clinic, department, or physician's office to ask about student observation. Formal requirements may vary depending on the department and type of experience.

Once You're Shadowing

- Keep track of who you contacted, when, and how many hours you logged.
 - This information will be useful when making your medical school applications
 - Follow up if appropriate to thank them for the opportunity
 - Remember, some of these connections could be lifelong, and may write letters of recommendation for your application! Be professional and kind.
- Arrive early. Introduce yourself clearly and your role in the clinic.
- Dress professionally (check with clinic if concerned).
- Stay off your phone. Show genuine interest and be engaged.
- Respect patient privacy. Never talk or post about any identifying patient experiences outside of the clinic.
- Do not touch patients, access charts, or participate in care unless you are authorized and trained to do so.
- Ask questions at appropriate times. It is an exciting opportunity, and you'll likely have lots of questions. Be respectful of the medical professional and do not ask in the middle of patient care or while they are occupied.
- Keep a brief personal reflection afterward about what you observed and learned.
 - Writing your memorable experiences from shadowing will make interviews & application season easier to prepare for!
 - Most importantly, pay attention to the parts of medicine that matter: communication, uncertainty, teamwork, documentation, difficult conversations, and the everyday relationship between physicians and patients.