

**Preceptor Guide: Working with First-Year Medical Students**

Thank you for your participation in the OAFP Foundation Summer Preceptorship Program. Your time and mentorship play a critical role in shaping early medical student perceptions of family medicine and inspiring future physicians.

**Program Purpose**

The goal of this experience is to provide first-year medical students with meaningful exposure to the breadth and depth of family medicine. At this early stage in training, students are not expected to have advanced clinical skills. Instead, the focus is on:

- Building understanding of the specialty
- Participating in patient care and clinical reasoning
- Experiencing the day-to-day realities of family medicine
- Exploring career pathways and professional fulfillment

**General Approach**

Because this is not part of a required curriculum, the experience is intentionally flexible, shaped by:

- Your comfort level as a preceptor
- The student's skills and confidence
- The workflow and opportunities available in your practice

Whenever possible, students should spend majority of their time directly with you. However, exposure to the full care team is highly encouraged to highlight the collaborative nature of primary care.

**What First-Year Students Can Realistically Do**

Students who have completed their first year of medical school typically have foundational knowledge but limited clinical experience. Activities can include observation, guided participation in patient care, and discussion. We encourage as many hands-on opportunities as possible as students learn best by doing.

**Clinical Observation & Participation**

- Shadow patient visits to observe:
  - History-taking
  - Physical exams
  - Clinical decision-making
- Narrate your thinking when possible (“thinking out loud”) to help students understand your approach
- Demonstrate how you build rapport and communicate with patients

**Active Student Participation (When Appropriate and as Much as Possible)**

- Practice focused histories (e.g., chief complaint-driven questions)
- Perform select components of the physical exam
- Assist with simple tasks like documenting findings or summarizing visits (if appropriate and compliant with your workflow)

**Teaching & Clinical Reasoning**

- Have the student preview patient charts before visits
- Ask simple guiding questions:
  - “What do you think might be going on?”
  - “What else would you want to ask?”
- Debrief briefly after visits:

- Discuss differential diagnoses
- Explain your clinical decisions
- Incorporate quick teaching moments on common primary care topics (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, preventive care)

### **Exposure to Team-Based Care**

Family medicine is more than the physician visit. Consider opportunities for the student to spend time with:

- Nurses and medical assistants
- Care coordinators or social workers
- Behavioral health providers (if available)
- Front desk or administrative staff

This helps students understand:

- Workflow and patient flow
- Care coordination
- The importance of each role in delivering high-quality care

### **Patient Education & Communication**

- Invite the student to observe or assist with:
  - Lifestyle counseling
  - Preventive care discussions
  - Chronic disease education
- Model how you tailor communication to different patients

### **Practice Operations & Systems**

Provide insight into the “behind-the-scenes” aspects of family medicine:

- Documentation workflows and EHR use (providing access to the EHR for student learners is helpful if it’s possible)
- Scheduling and time management
- Population health tools and preventive care tracking
- Balancing clinical care with administrative responsibilities

### **Encouraging Curiosity**

- Prompt the student to look up clinical questions that arise during the day
- Ask them to share a brief takeaway or summary
- Reinforce that curiosity and lifelong learning are essential in family medicine

### **Creating a Positive Experience**

You don’t need a formal curriculum to make a lasting impact. What matters most:

- Be welcoming and approachable
- Encourage questions—no matter how basic
- Share your personal story and why you chose family medicine
- Be honest about both the rewards and challenges of the specialty

### **Final Thoughts**

Your mentorship offers students an early and powerful glimpse into what a career in family medicine can look like. Even small interactions—explaining your thought process, introducing them to your team, or sharing your passion—can significantly influence their future path.

**Thank you for investing in the next generation of family physicians.**

### **Resources**

- OAFP Foundation webpage: <https://www.ohioafp.org/foundation/what-you-can-do/#preceptor>
- STFM webpage: [www.stfm.org](http://www.stfm.org)

## **Student Experience Checklist**

Students receive a companion guide that includes a checklist of suggested experiences for their time with you. This checklist is intended to serve as a flexible framework, not a set of requirements.

We've included it here to provide visibility into the student experience and help align expectations. You may find it helpful as a reference when identifying opportunities for observation, participation, and discussion throughout the rotation.

### **Clinical Exposure**

- Observed daily patient visits
- Observed history-taking and physical exams
- Heard clinical decision-making explained
- Saw a variety of patient types (age, conditions, visit types)

### **Participation & Skills**

- Practiced taking a focused history
- Practiced part of a physical exam
- Summarized a patient case to my preceptor
- Asked questions during or after visits
- Took part in/completed a procedure

### **Clinical Thinking**

- Thought about possible diagnoses for a patient
- Discussed a care plan with my preceptor
- Reflected on what I would do next in a case

### **Care Team & Systems**

- Spent time with a nurse or medical assistant
- Observed another member of the care team
- Learned something about clinic workflow or operations

### **Learning & Curiosity**

- Looked up a clinical topic or question
- Shared something I learned with my preceptor
- Learned about a common condition or medication

### **Professional Growth**

- Asked for feedback
- Reflected on my experience
- Learned something new about family medicine as a career