

FAQs: (Pediatrics)

Given Step 1 is now Pass/Fail, what advice would you give to a first-year medical student about what they can or should be doing early on to be competitive in your specialty?

- The same things as before for pediatrics. Make yourself a well-rounded applicant. Strong LORs, a CV/personal statement that gives insight about you, show you are a team player on rotations (eval comments will note this usually in MSPE in clinical years), volunteer (doesn't have to be in pediatrics but can't hurt – remember there are many ways to volunteer; activities that show a love of kids catches our eye even if it's not medical), research isn't a must but doesn't hurt. If you see yourself applying to top tier/competitive programs then you need to be fully balanced with the research.

Would you ever take someone with a Step 1 failure?

- Yes. If you fail then address in your personal statement and point out your strengths clinically. Multiple failures are the bigger red flag and will possibly hinder chance at an interview.

What advice would you give about getting letters of recommendation in your specialty?

- Approach someone you have worked with on a rotation or in a volunteer activity. Ask if they can write a strong letter of recommendation. Give the letter writer plenty of notice, but also make sure they have a clear deadline. Give the letter writer your CV, personal statement, including test scores and let them know of any concerns on your record so they can help address them if possible and any other pertinent information that may help them. If it's been a while since working with this person, it's helpful to send them a copy of their clerkship evaluation of you to refresh their memory! The letters don't have to be from your specialty but I would advise at least 2 in specialty if possible. Most programs want 2-3 letters at minimum. Some programs will request a department chair or PD letter – if you are unfamiliar with these in your field then reach out via email, send your CV/Personal statement (including scores as known) and ask to set up a meeting (virtual is ok if needed) to discuss with them in person.

What is the value of doing audition rotations in your specialty?

- - I think they can be helpful. I would be careful about doing a sub internship at a program that you are interested in. It is ok to do but you will be compared to students in that program who already know the system. Consider doing elective rotations. Getting to know faculty and residents can help your chances of getting in. This allows a possible letter writer the chance to see you in action and gives the program a chance to do the same. The residents/staff you work with will all remember how much a part of the team you were. Also consider doing

rotations in areas where you get the most resident exposure (its MSU, ED, maybe PICU for us, i think) - then you get to learn about the specialty and get to know the residents at the program and learn how truly satisfied they are with their program.

To what extent does research, publications, or presentations affect one's ability to match in your specialty?

- Not a make or break for pediatrics unless you want to go to a more competitive program. They are helpful in general but not a "deal breaker". The pediatric match data don't really show a major difference in match rate with respect to publications, etc.

Is a Step 2CK score needed before you will invite someone for an interview?

- No. It is helpful if Step 1 score wasn't the best. Top programs may want it to be completed first.

What does the perfect applicant look like in your specialty?

- Well-rounded. Performs average to well in clerkships, is a team player, has volunteer efforts. More or less in descending order of importance: Glowing letters of recommendation, outstanding interview skills, excellent grades and step scores, meaningful volunteer and research experience.

Does a student need to Honor in your specialty to match?

- No

The students have significant elective time during their 3rd year for career exploration.

a. What electives would you recommend to a student who knows they are interested in your specialty?

- More hospital or clinic time of any variety but in general peds. Would consider a few specialty electives for pediatrics to see if this is something you are interested in. High yield would be: dermatology, orthopedics, cardiology, ID, GI, psych. Bottom line is any are helpful – but show interest, read on topics, talk with team in your rotation area (especially faculty and residents/fellows, if any).

b. What electives would you recommend to a student who is undecided but considering your specialty?

- More hospital or clinic time of any variety but in general pediatrics. Talk with faculty about what they like and don't like about the specialty.

Is there anything else I haven't asked that you feel an applicant to your specialty ought to know?

- Take the time to talk to the residents in the field you are considering and see what a day is like in their shoes and imagine yourself there. They are the best representation of what it is currently like and can best answer specific residency related questions. Go to conferences when on "audition rotations" to get to know as many residents/faculty as possible. Make yourself known and that you are interested. Many students are concerned about the number of programs they should apply to. For an average student applying to pediatrics, 12-15 interviews should be adequate, as long as there is a good mix of programs.