

# Job Shadowing for Pre-med Majors

A Resource Provided by USCB Career Services

<p>What is Job Shadowing and How Does It Differ from an Internship?</p>	<p>Medical schools often request job shadowing experiences from their applicants to ensure that the prospective student has first-hand experiences in the medical field before entering a program of study. Job shadowing is more of an observational experience as opposed to the hands-on experiences afforded by internships. You will be with a doctor as they go through their daily activities seeing patients, completing paperwork, communicating with staff, or any other activities that come up. You will be in the background observing.</p>
<p>Why Should I Job Shadow Physicians or Other Healthcare Professionals?</p>	<p>Job Shadowing helps your gain a realistic understanding of medical careers and decide if medicine is the right career path for you. In addition, job shadowing experiences give you something to write about in your personal statements that are a requirement in the professional school application process. Some medical schools require as many as 75 hours of job shadowing, so it's a good idea to start planning your job shadowing experiences early.</p>
<p>How Do I Find a Job Shadowing Opportunity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contacting your family physician is a good place to start. Even if this person is unable to offer you a job shadowing experience, they may be able to suggest someone who can. If you do not have a family physician, you may know someone who knows a doctor so you can ask that person for an introduction.</li><li>• When you do not have any direct or indirect contacts with a physician, you may need to cold call doctors in your area. You will want to identify local doctors and their specialties. Then you will want to write a professional email and provide your resume when making a request. All doctors were in your situation once and so even if it takes contacting several doctors, it is probable that you will find someone who is willing to work with you.</li><li>• Before soliciting local doctors, think about what area(s) of medicine interests you. You can target these specialties in your email campaign. If you do not know any specific area of interest, you can reach out to primary care specialists in family medicine, pediatrics, or internal medicine.</li><li>• This packet contains resources for finding local doctors, and example emails to follow. The USCB Career Center also has resume and curriculum vitae resources to help you craft these documents before you begin your campaign.</li></ul>

<p>What Will Happen During the Job Shadowing Experience?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the job shadow, you will quietly follow the doctor during their daily routine. When seeing patients, the doctor will introduce you. If the patient isn't comfortable with you in the room, you may be asked to step outside. Remember that's okay.</li> <li>• Since all patient information is confidential, you may be asked to sign a HIPAA compliance document.</li> <li>• If the doctor asks for your comments, questions, or observations be sure to offer your insights. Some patients may be curious about your education and interest in the medical profession. Always politely answer the patients' questions.</li> <li>• You should be professionally dressed during this experience. It is recommended that you wear sensible, comfortable shoes and that you bring a pen and notebook as you will want to record your observations for future reference.</li> <li>• Show up to the job shadowing experience on time and make sure you have the correct address before the date of arrival. If possible, take a test drive to the office before your scheduled day to make sure you don't get lost on the way and arrive late on the day of your experience.</li> <li>• Be polite to everyone you meet that day. Everyone in the office is part of the team and their opinions of you are important. Plus, you never know what you will learn from someone unexpected!</li> </ul>
<p>What Should I Do After the Job Shadowing Experience?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the day is over, be sure to thank the doctor before you leave and all the staff who helped you throughout the day.</li> <li>• Write personal thank-you notes to the office and to the doctor as soon as you return home from the visit. Put these notes in the mail right away. Buy your cards, stationary, and stamps before the visit to avoid delays.</li> <li>• Be prepared to offer the doctor a verbal summary of your observations from the experience. Be sure to identify what you learned, what was unexpected, and what you liked most about the experience. As you leave the office, it is okay to ask the doctor for a letter of recommendation since their work with you will be fresh on their minds. Plus, if you offer insightful observations the doctor will be impressed and even more willing to honor the request!</li> </ul>
<p>Are There Alternatives to Job Shadowing that are Helpful when Applying to Medical School?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are alternatives to job shadowing. There are jobs that demonstrate you have experience in the medical field and that you have made an informed decision about medical school. Plus, jobs in the medical field offer you direct contact with physicians who could provide job shadowing experiences.</li> <li>• Volunteering with community organizations either in the medical field or with ones that put you in contact with unique populations are advantageous when applying to medical school. Volunteer experiences can also expose you to medical professionals who may assist you with finding job shadowing experiences.</li> <li>• You can also apply to structured programs such as the Summer Health Professions Education Program. Information about this opportunity is included in this resource.</li> </ul>

## Finding a Job Shadowing Experience & Alternatives to Job Shadowing

### Finding Health Care Professionals

- The South Carolina Dental Association provides [this resource](https://www.scdca.org/community/find-a-dentist) to help you identify dental professionals within a zip code or specialty. This is a good place to get contact information when you do not have a personal contact in this field. Use this address to find the resource: <https://www.scdca.org/community/find-a-dentist> .
- Beaufort Memorial Hospital (BMH) provides a [physician finder](https://www.bmhsc.org/find-a-provider/) and you can search by location to get a broad list of physicians nearby. Use this address to find the BMH physician finder: <https://www.bmhsc.org/find-a-provider/> .
- Hilton Head Regional also provides a [physician network](https://hiltonheadregionalphysiciannetwork.com/) where you can search by location or specialty to get a broad list of physicians nearby. Use this address to access the Hilton Head Regional physician network: <https://hiltonheadregionalphysiciannetwork.com/> .

### Volunteer Experiences to Support Professional School Applications

Career Services recommends using the Community Foundation of the Low Country's [volunteer network](http://www.lowcountryvolunteerconnections.org/need/) to find local volunteering opportunities that may put you in direct contact with local physicians and/or populations that require special care. You may use this address to access this resource:

<http://www.lowcountryvolunteerconnections.org/need/>.

- A recent search of this web based resource found opportunities with *Hilton Head Volunteers in Medicine* (Greeters, Schedulers, Medical Records Clerks.); *Caris Healthcare* (Administrative); *Good Neighbors Free Medical Clinic of Beaufort* (Front Desk Volunteer); *Mental Health America* (General Volunteers); *Hopeful Horizons* (Crisis Intervention Volunteer); *Bluffton, Jasper Volunteers in Medicine* (Front Desk and Translators); *Memory Matters* (Support Programs Volunteer); and *THA Group Island Hospice* (Home Care Volunteer). These volunteer opportunities are updated on a regular basis. Check in often to find volunteer opportunities.

Volunteering with hospitals is also an excellent way to expand your network and gain exposure to healthcare professions. Beaufort Memorial, Hilton Head Regional and St. Joseph's Candler all have volunteer opportunities. A list of the local hospital volunteer resources is on page 4 of this document.

### Jobs that Help You Gain Experience in Healthcare

Consider finding a part-time job in healthcare that will give you access to professionals in the field. Being employed not only provides you access to professionals; it also helps you fund your undergraduate education. The American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) suggests the following paid opportunities to gain experience outside of shadowing.

- **Hospice Volunteer:** Medical students should understand the emotional toll of caring for a dying patient. Becoming a hospice volunteer gives you direct interaction with patients and their families. Most hospice organizations provide counseling to help you personally process these experiences.
- **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA):** Most community colleges and the Red Cross provide CNA training courses. CNA's have direct patient care access in a clinical setting.
- **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT):** Serving as an EMT, even a voluntary EMT, may require training. Local community colleges often provide continuing education courses at reasonable rates. Being an EMT is an excellent way to serve on the front-line of healthcare.
- **Medical Scribe:** Many resources suggest becoming a medical scribe as a means of gaining experience in healthcare. Scribes do not perform clinical work, but they are completely immersed in the healthcare ecosystem by working alongside physicians and nurses. Scribes often accompany healthcare providers

to transcribe patient history, physical exam findings and other evaluations. There are companies that train scribes as part of the service they provide.

Resources Consulted: ScribeAmerica Job Posting and *Five Ways to Gain Experience Without Shadowing* by the AAMC

### Volunteer with Local Hospitals

#### Beaufort Memorial Hospital Volunteers

- BMH strives to match each volunteer's skills and interests with the needs of the hospital to ensure a meaningful experience. This address will take you to the volunteer page where you may download an application: <https://www.bmhsc.org/ways-to-give/volunteer> . You may email questions or your resume with application to [volunteers@bmhsc.org](mailto:volunteers@bmhsc.org).

#### Hilton Head Regional Volunteers

- Hilton Head Regional has a volunteer auxiliary. You may follow this link to submit an application: <http://hhiaux.org/volunteers/>. If you have questions, you may contact Julia Baldree-Rathke at [Julia.Baldreerathke@tenethealth.com](mailto:Julia.Baldreerathke@tenethealth.com).

#### St Joseph'/Candler Volunteers

- Saint Joseph's/Candler has a College Student Volunteer Program. Though this hospital is in Savannah, Georgia, it is less than an hour's drive to the facilities from the USCB Bluffton Campus. You may use this link to get more information about the college student program: <https://www.sjchs.org/volunteer-services> .

### Other Specialized Student Programs

#### Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP)

- SHPEP is a summer program that is designed to increase the acceptance rates of medical school applicants from racial and ethnic minority groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in medicine – African Americans, Mexican Americans, mainland Puerto Ricans, and American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- To be eligible to apply, you must be a freshman or sophomore in college with a minimum GPA of 2.5. You must be a U.S. citizen, a permanent resident, or an individual granted deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) status by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- Other factors for consideration to the program are that you identify with one of the racially/ethnically underrepresented groups, that you come from an economically or educationally disadvantaged background, that you have an interest in affecting the underserved populations and that you submit a compelling personal statement with a strong letter of recommendation.
- Follow this link to find out more about this program and the application process: <https://www.shpep.org/apply-to-shpep/> .

### **Sample Emails to Request a Job Shadowing Experience**

(If you know the email address, you may send an email. If you don't you should write a letter.)

#### Sample Email to Family Physician

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope this note finds you well. You may recall that I am a student at the University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) majoring in \_\_\_\_\_. I aspire to become a physician and am particularly

interested in \_\_\_\_\_. (You may list more than one specialty. Just make sure one is the same as this physician's specialty.)

I am hoping to arrange some shadowing opportunities in order to learn more about the day-to-day of being a doctor, and I'm wondering if you'd be open to me spending some time in your office during the upcoming academic year. I can share the dates of my winter, spring, and summer breaks so that we can coordinate calendars.

I'd be grateful for your time. I would be happy to discuss what time frame would be convenient for you via email or over the phone. If it is not possible for me to shadow with you, could you suggest another physician I could contact?

Many thanks and kind regards,

Sally S. Shark

843-123-1234

### Sample Email to Physician You Do Not Know Personally

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a junior at the University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) majoring in \_\_\_\_\_. I am considering applying to medical school and am hoping to shadow a doctor to give me a better sense of the profession. I received your contact information by \_\_\_\_\_ (searching a web-based resource, though a personal contact that should be named, or by other means).

Would you be willing to allow me to shadow you during a workday in the upcoming months? I would be grateful for any amount of time that you could spare, whether that's one day or a few. I will not be in class during the upcoming \_\_\_\_\_ (fall, winter, spring, summer) break, so I am the most flexible with my time when classes are not in session.

I am more than willing to provide references from my faculty and other mentors. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this possibility and the dates that would work best for you. If you are unable to provide this experience, if there is another physician you could recommend, I would be most appreciative.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Sandy Shark

843-123-1234

Resource Consulted: *How to Ask to Shadow a Doctor* by Shemmassianconsulting.com

### **Sample Letter to Family Physician**

(Your Address is First)  
123 Tsunami Drive  
Bluffton, SC 29909  
(843) 208 0 9283

(Date Letter is Written)  
October 13, 2022

(The Doctor's Address is Next)

Dr. Jaws Shark. MD  
Beaufort Memorial Hospital  
955 Ribaut Road  
Beaufort, SC 29902

Dear Dr. Jaws Shark,

I hope this note finds you well. You may recall that I am a student at the University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) majoring in biology. I aspire to become a physician and am particularly interested in (the field of medicine you are interested in).

I would like to arrange some shadowing opportunities in order to learn more about the day-to-day of being a doctor, and I am wondering if you would be open to me spending some time in your office during the upcoming academic year. I can share the dates of my winter, spring, and summer breaks so that we can coordinate calendars.

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I am more than willing to provide references from my faculty or other mentors. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this possibility and the dates that would work best for you. If you are unable to provide this experience, if there is another physician you could recommend, I would be most appreciative.

Sincerely,

*Sandy Shark*

Sandy S. Shark

## What to Wear to Job Shadow

Most of the time it is safest to dress in business attire. These examples are mostly business formal attire. The example of someone not wearing a tie is an acceptable business casual or a gender neutral option. You may be able to skip the jackets, but you should wear dress pants or skirts and a professional shirt or blouse.



Need something to wear to a job shadowing experience, but your budget is tight?

**Use the USCB Career Closet!**

Contact Career Services to find out more by emailing [AR60@uscb.edu](mailto:AR60@uscb.edu).