

# Parent's Guide: Helping Your Student Apply to Med School

With college students busier than ever, sometimes an applicant's parent(s) will get involved to try to help with the medical school application process. This fact sheet is not meant to be a comprehensive guide; rather, it provides tips and best practices to help parents navigate the medical school application process.

## When is parental involvement appropriate?

There are times when parental intervention is appropriate but, in general, medical schools believe that applicants should function independently and expect that the materials submitted by applicants are entirely their own work. Excessive or active involvement by a parent, however well intended, is likely to undermine the school's view of the applicant as a responsible adult capable of managing complex challenges. According to Julie Chanatry, chemistry instructor and health professions advisor at Colgate University and president of the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, "It is good advice to tell your son or daughter to seek out the health professions advisor on his or her campus. The advisor will want to establish a relationship with each applicant to encourage them to develop independence, responsibility, and good judgment—qualities valued by medical schools. Parental intervention is occasionally appropriate, but an overly involved parent almost always does more harm than good. Over involvement hampers the advising process and may be disadvantageous to a student going through the application process, and it may cause advisors to question the maturity of a student and their motivation for medicine when they consistently are dealing with a parent rather than a student."

## I'm a physician (or health care professional) and have been through this myself. Why shouldn't I help guide my child?

Although some parents may have been through the process themselves as prior medical school applicants, the application process, procedures, and requirements for admissions likely have changed. This possibly can lead to friction in the family and the possibility of inadvertently leading the applicant astray.

## Who can help advise my child?

Many colleges have health professions advisors whose job is to assist students and alumni with their applications to schools in the health professions and from whom applicants can seek reliable and relevant guidance. There are publications and resources available from the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions ([www.naahp.org](http://www.naahp.org)). Their site also gives advice for applicants attending a school without a designated pre-health advisor or for those who have already graduated. In addition, the AAMC website provides extensive support for applicants, and individual medical schools provide guidance for their school-specific process. Dr. Chanatry states, "In addition to being quite knowledgeable about the application process, advisors at undergraduate institutions and post-baccalaureate programs are experts on their institutional requirements, policies, and procedures, which can help the applicant chart a path that leads to a successful application."

## What type of parental involvement is permitted when applying for financial aid?

Although students are considered independent for federal loans, schools often will request parental financial information to determine student eligibility for institutional scholarships or grants, or possibly institutional loans. You can help your child by providing the information requested in a timely manner; however, financial aid offices usually only discuss a student's financial aid with the student.

Talking to your son or daughter about financing their education is extremely important. Discussing what their financial responsibilities will be, how to budget their money, where to turn for reliable financial guidance, and other financial concepts prior to going to school will help the student transition from being financially dependent to being financially competent and confident.

## Why am I being asked to provide financial data for The AAMC Fee Assistance Program if my child is applying as financially independent?

The AAMC [Fee Assistance Program](#) is privately funded and has established certain eligibility guidelines, which may differ from federally funded aid programs. These eligibility guidelines take in to account the federal poverty guideline, as specified by family size, and are verified by tax documentation from the previous year. Unlike some federally funded programs, the AAMC Fee Assistance Program does not draw distinction based

upon the student’s dependent or independent status and, therefore, parental financial information and supporting tax documentation are required portions of the application process for all applicants. Parental information is viewed independently from applicant data, but also must fall within eligibility guidelines. This requirement cannot be waived on the basis of a student’s marital status, age, or tax filing status.

**Can I make calls or inquiries on behalf of my child about their AMCAS® application status? What if they’re studying abroad?**

If an applicant has listed you as an alternate contact person in the Biographic Information section of their application, then you may call the AMCAS Support Center for information about an application. Your name must be listed in order for AMCAS to share application information. However, applicants are not required to enter an alternate contact person. (Note: Check with non-AMCAS schools for their policy or procedure regarding alternate contacts.) According to Robert A. Witzburg, associate dean and director of admissions at Boston University School of Medicine, “Individual schools have specific policies about alternate contacts and may be reluctant to provide information to a parent without prior release from the applicant.”

**Can I make calls on behalf of my child about their MCAT® score?**

For privacy purposes, the AAMC is not authorized to release any MCAT information directly to parents or guardians unless a Third Party Consent Form is on file with the MCAT Program Office. To request the form, please send an e-mail to [mcats@amc.org](mailto:mcats@amc.org), or call (202) 828-0699. Additionally, MCAT staff cannot provide score information over the phone. However, an applicant can view his or her scores on the MCAT Testing History (THx) System 30–35 days after the test date. The THx system includes all scores from 1991 to the present. Please refer to the 2013 Registration Deadline and Score Release Schedule for details.



**MORE INFORMATION**

**AMCAS® Instruction Manual:**

[www.aamc.org/students/download/182162/data/amcas\\_instruction\\_manual.pdf](http://www.aamc.org/students/download/182162/data/amcas_instruction_manual.pdf)

**AMCAS FAQs:**

[www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/faqs/](http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/faqs/)

**AAMC Fee Assistance Program:**

[www.aamc.org/fap](http://www.aamc.org/fap)

**MCAT® FAQs**

[www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/faq/](http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/faq/)

**Financial Information Resources, Services, and Tools (FIRST)**

[www.aamc.org/FIRST](http://www.aamc.org/FIRST)