

Frequency Asked Questions About the SEARCH Program



What is SEARCH?

SEARCH stands for Student/Residents Experiences and Rotations in Community Health. It is a program funded by the National Health Service Corps to provide health professions students with community-oriented, primary-care rotations in medically underserved areas. The program is administered through a government contact by the Tennessee Primary Care Association.

What is the National Health Service Corps?

The NHSC is group of dedicated and caring clinicians providing primary health care to adults and children in the communities of greatest need across the Nation. These clinicians are committed to improving the health of the Nation's underserved.

Approximately 50 million people live in communities without access to primary health care. NHSC is working to change this by helping medically underserved communities recruit and retain primary care clinicians, including dental and mental and behavioral health professionals, to serve in their community.

More than 27,000 health professionals have served with NHSC since 1972. Current field strength totals more than 4,000 clinicians/health care professionals whose careers are influencing the outcomes of underserved populations and communities. Many of these clinicians have remained in service after fulfilling their initial NHSC commitments.

See more details at <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/>.

What are the Program Goals and Objectives?

The main goal of the program is to provide opportunities for health professions students and residents to serve in interdisciplinary primary health care teams within underserved communities. The objectives of the SEARCH program are to: 1) facilitate and strengthen community-academic linkages; and 2) increase the recruitment and the retention of health care professionals in health professional shortage areas in these communities.

What Clinical Disciplines May Participate?

The SEARCH program provides rotations to the following student disciplines: primary care residents, dental students, medical students, masters-level nursing students, physician assistant students, nurse midwifery students, masters-level social work students, clinical psychology students, psychiatric nursing students, and marriage and family therapy students. Students must have completed one-year (two-semester) in their program to be eligible (with the exception of medical residents who are eligible in any year of their residency).

What is the Length of a Rotation and When Are Rotations Available?

Students may complete a rotation during vacation or as a requirement for elective rotation during their school

year. The rotation must be a minimum of four weeks and is usually four to six weeks. We accept applications year-round. Summer rotation applications must be received by March 1.

How Do Students Apply?

Applications are available on our web site at <http://www.tnpca.org/search.html>. You may also contact denise@tnpca.org or call 615-392-3836, ext 16 to have an application faxed or e-mailed.

Where Are the Rotation Sites?

Student placements are made in federally funded community health centers statewide and in other community-based primary-care practices in underserved areas, including public health department clinics, homeless health care clinics, faith-based clinics, rural health clinics, mental health clinics, NHSC practices, and private practices. We prefer that sites: accept patients regardless of their ability to pay; offer a sliding fee scale; and accept Medicare and Medicaid (TennCare).

What if the School Has Placed A Student at a Site?

We will accept placements made by health professions schools, as long as they meet the qualifications in the above section “Where Are the Rotation Sites?” Students should complete an application and indicate the location and dates of the school placement.

What Are My Chances of Being Accepted as a SEARCH Student?

The program is competitive and the number of placements is limited (generally 32 per year). *Priority is given to NHSC scholars from both in and out of state.* However, many non-scholars are accepted. Acceptance depends upon the number of applications received, the distribution among the disciplines and schools, the student’s interest as manifested in their application “description of interest” section. Priority is given in this order: NHSC scholars both in and out of state, in-state students, and out-of-state students.

What Are the Student’s Rotation Requirements?

SEARCH participants are required to design and complete a community-oriented primary care project in conjunction with the assigned site based on the needs of the community. Projects may be oriented toward research, patient education, community outreach, assessment, health promotion, or disease prevention. Projects may be new or continuations of ongoing work at the center, but the student’s task should be such that it can be realistically completed during the rotation. More information will be provided the student and preceptor upon acceptance in the program.

Other student rotation requirements:

- Read the online SEARCH manual prior to your rotation and use it as a tool during your rotation (and after). This manual was created as an introduction to community health care issues for SEARCH students. It is a reference source for understanding the broader scope of community health, approaches to interdisciplinary health care and teamwork, and issues of diversity. All these issues are essential to providing quality, culturally-sensitive care. The manual will assist as you plan your community-oriented project, and serve as a reference tool during the rotation and beyond. The manual is found at <http://www.tnpca.org/tnsearch/index.html>.
- Keep a journal (either paper or electronic) of your experiences. This is important for both your own reflection about your experiences and also is used for overall SEARCH evaluation. Please do the following:
 - document one or two of your patient encounters each day and what those encounters mean to you in terms of your learning and your feelings as a health care provider—you do not have to go into detail about the patient’s condition—just a brief description;

- include observations about the health professions you are working with, your feeling about how working in a interdisciplinary environment is positive/negative to the care of the patients;
 - note any unique cultural experiences you have, how the SEARCH experience has strengthened your cultural competency (or not), etc.
 - indicate how this experience has increased/decreased your interest in working with underserved populations;
 - indicate your feelings about the overall experience.
- We strongly urge you to develop a learning contract with your preceptor and will provide a learning contract form. Complete the first section either prior to or on your first day of the rotation; set up a meeting at the end of the first week to go over your learning objectives with your preceptor; meet your preceptor at the mid-point of your rotation for a review of the objectives and at the end of your rotation for a final review. You will NOT share this information with SEARCH. This is a tool to help you and your preceptor establish goals and communicate about your progress.
 - Complete a brief evaluation survey at the end of the rotation.
 - Keep SEARCH updated with your contact information every six months for one year following graduation (required by the national SEARCH Program).

Site/Student Stipends

SEARCH provides an expense stipend to both students and their clinic site. Students receive an expense stipend depending upon the length of their rotation and whether they relocate. Those who relocate will receive a larger stipend.

Who Precepts the Students?

Clinicians from a variety of fields may precept students: primary care allopathic and osteopathic physicians in family medicine, general internal medicine physicians, general pediatric physicians, obstetricians/gynecologists, primary care physicians, dentists, clinical social workers, family/primary care nurse practitioners, primary care physician assistants, certified nurse midwives, clinical psychologists, certified marriage and family therapists, and psychiatric nurse specialists. We provide the preceptor with information about the program and the student and supply web-based tools to facilitate the precepting experience. A preceptor development training event (CME credit) is offered annually and is free of charge.

Contact Information

For more information about SEARCH, please contact the Program Coordinator, Denise Primm, at denise@tnpca.org or at 615-329-3836, ext. 16.



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