

Parent's Guide: Helping Your Student Apply to Medical School



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Students are busier than ever, and as a result, sometimes an applicant's parent(s) want to get involved with the medical school application process. Here are some tips and best practices to help parents navigate the medical school application process with the applicant.

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 the materials submitted by applicants are entirely their own work. 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.

What if I'm a physician or health care professional and have been through this myself?

Although some parents may have been through the process themselves as prior medical school applicants, the application process, procedures, and requirements for admission likely have changed. Parents who make suggestions based on outdated information can inadvertently lead the applicant astray.

How can I be sure my child receives appropriate help?

Many colleges have health professions advisors whose job is to assist students and alumni with their applications to health professions schools. These advisors can give applicants up-to-date, accurate, reliable, and relevant guidance.

According to Julie Chanatry, chemistry instructor and health professions advisor at Colgate University and past president of the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP), "It is good advice to tell your son or daughter to seek out the health professions advisor on their 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."

Chanatry adds, "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 are consistently dealing with a parent rather than a student.”

One way you can help is by sharing reliable sources of information, such as resources from the AAMC website, [aamc.org/students](https://www.aamc.org/students), or the NAAHP website, [naahp.org](https://www.naahp.org).

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

Although students are considered independent for federal loans, schools often 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 status or eligibility with the student. Talking to your son or daughter about financing their education is extremely important. Discussing financial concepts such as what their financial responsibilities will be, how to budget their money, and where to turn for reliable financial guidance will help the student transition from being financially dependent to being financially competent and confident. Review the AAMC's FIRST program together for helpful information, resources, and tools: [aamc.org/first](https://www.aamc.org/first).

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 into 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 between a student's dependent or independent status; 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 must also fall within eligibility guidelines. This requirement cannot be waived on the basis of a student's marital status, age, or tax filing status. For more information, refer to [aamc.org/fap](https://www.aamc.org/fap).

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 AMCAS application, you may call the AAMC Services Contact Center for information about an application. Your name must be listed



on the application for the AAMC to share AMCAS application information. However, applicants are not required to enter an alternate contact person. Check with non-AMCAS schools for their policies and procedures about alternate contacts.

According to Robert Witzburg, emeritus 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 or inquiries on behalf of my child about their MCAT® score?

For privacy purposes, the AAMC is not authorized to release any MCAT information directly to a parent or guardian unless they are listed as an alternate contact under the “Use of Personal Info” section in the MCAT Registration System. This section can be edited until the Bronze Zone deadline of the student's scheduled exam. Your son or daughter may also request authorization to release MCAT information in the MCAT Registration System through the “Submit another type of request” option under the “Service Requests” section.

Please note that MCAT staff cannot provide score information over the phone. However, an applicant can view their scores in the MCAT Score Reporting System 30-35 days after the test date. The system includes all scores from 1991 to the present. Please refer to the MCAT site for details: [aamc.org/mcat](https://www.aamc.org/mcat).

For more information, visit [aamc.org/students](https://www.aamc.org/students).

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