

# Prehealth Advisor FAQs

## SUMMER HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Shaping Careers. Changing Lives.



The National Program Office offers a variety of online tools and resources, including these FAQs, to enhance the advising and application experience and maximize your students' chances for acceptance into the Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP).

## You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers!

Use these FAQs to better prepare your SHPEP applicants for a successful application process.

### 1. What is SHPEP? What does it offer and how does it differ from other pathway programs?

SHPEP is much more than just a six-week summer academic enrichment program; it's a transformational experience that provides students with the tools needed for long-term success in the health professions. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, SHPEP offers scholars opportunities that extend well beyond the program's six weeks. In addition to academic enrichment in basic sciences and math, clinical experiences, career development activities, learning and study skills seminars, and financial planning workshops, SHPEP sets students up for continued involvement and growth through a supportive community of program alums.

After its inception as the Minority Medical Education Program (MMEP) in 1989 and transition to the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP) in 2006, SHPEP expanded in 2016 to encompass a broad range of health professions, including medicine, dentistry, nursing, optometry, pharmacy, physical therapy, and public health. The program's interprofessional approach is one of its defining features, offering a unique curriculum that fosters collaboration across different health career tracks.

However, SHPEP's impact doesn't end after the summer. As program alums, scholars gain access to an extensive network of professionals and peers in the health professions, along with exclusive opportunities for mentorship, internships, scholarships, and continued academic support. SHPEP alums often find

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themselves connected to further career development resources, leadership programs, and community-building activities, allowing them to stay engaged in their health profession journeys long after the six weeks are over.

Advisors can motivate prospective students to apply by emphasizing the lasting benefits of SHPEP. It's not just a summer program — it's a gateway to a lifelong support network, providing scholars with the tools they need to excel in the health professions, while fostering diversity and interprofessional collaboration to improve health outcomes.

### 2. When does the SHPEP application season open and close?

Students can apply to SHPEP from Nov. 1 through Feb. 5.\* It's important to encourage students to fill out the online application and submit their supporting materials as early as possible during the application season. All transcripts and letters of recommendation must be postmarked or time-stamped by the application deadline, as incomplete applications will not be considered for the program.

*\*Please visit [shpep.org](https://shpep.org) for any updates on application opening and deadline dates.*

### 3. How should students choose their SHPEP Program Sites?

[SHPEP Program Sites](#) offer a variety of health profession tracks and students may select up to three different institutions based on their interests. Those who are undecided on their career path can explore different health professions by choosing a unique career pathway at each institution. Advisors should encourage them to consider factors such as location, type of institution, and specific interests in each Program Site. It's also a good idea to recommend that they select at least one site that is close to their undergraduate institution or home, if applicable. This can make travel and logistics easier, while providing opportunities to build local connections.

### 4. What factors are most important in the evaluation of an SHPEP application?

All application materials are important during the evaluation process. Advisors should emphasize to students that SHPEP uses a holistic approach in selecting scholars, meaning that a wide variety of factors are considered, and no single part of the application is more important than another. Students should ensure that their application is complete, with transcripts and a letter of recommendation, by the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed by Program Sites.

Advisors should encourage students to apply as long as they meet the GPA criteria, even if their GPA is on the lower end. SHPEP looks at the overall picture, so students shouldn't feel discouraged if their GPA isn't perfect. They should focus on crafting a strong narrative in their application, highlighting activities and experiences that align with their desired health professions track. This personal narrative can help showcase their passion and commitment to the field.

To give students a better understanding of what a successful applicant looks like, advisors can share stories from past SHPEP scholars. These stories provide insight into the experiences and achievements of students who have gone through the program. Visit [SHPEP Alumni Stories](#) for more information.

### 5. What are some important points to include in the personal statement? How can you help your students write a strong statement?

There is no wrong way to write a personal statement — it's a reflection of each student's unique experiences and journey. Some students may feel hesitant to share personal challenges that have impacted their educational or financial circumstances, but it's important to encourage them to

be open and transparent. These experiences can help demonstrate their resilience and desire to pursue the health professions. Students should also highlight any activities that align with their chosen career paths.

Advisors can provide valuable support during this process. Many campuses offer free writing workshops, which can be an excellent resource for students as they craft their personal statements. Advisors should connect students with these services to help improve their writing. Additionally, advisors are encouraged to review students' personal statements to catch any grammatical errors and ensure their essays stay within the 600-word limit.

### **6. Should the letter of recommendation come from someone at the student's university or college? If not, who else is qualified to give a recommendation?**

SHPEP requires one strong letter of recommendation, ideally from a prehealth advisor or a college professor within the student's major field of study. If neither is available, a recommendation from a high school science or math teacher, an employer in a health-related field, a supervisor from a volunteer experience, or a community leader the student has worked with is also acceptable.

It's crucial that the letter highlights the student's strengths and explains why they would be an excellent fit for the program. A well-crafted, personalized recommendation can make a significant impact on the application. To help students understand how to effectively request a letter and what makes a strong recommendation, you can share this informative video: "[Recommendations 101 - How to Ask for a Letter of Recommendation](#)." This resource provides valuable tips on approaching potential letter writers and ensuring that the letter speaks to the student's qualifications and passion for the health professions.

### **7. Where do I send applicants who have additional questions about their application status or the selection process?**

Students should log in to their application to check the Application Status for updates. Advisors should remind them that it can take up to 10 business days for the National Program Office to process application materials, whether received via email or mail. If their online application is submitted after the supporting materials are received, it may take up to two additional business days for the Application Status to be updated.

Keep in mind that processing times for transcripts may vary by institution, so students should consider both their institution's processing time and the expected delivery time to the National Program Office in Washington, D.C., when estimating how long it will take to receive and process their transcripts. Similarly, students should ensure their letter writers submit recommendations by the deadline and confirm the submission method with them.

For additional information about [the selection process](#), encourage students to refer to the [SHPEP website](#), or contact the National Program Office at 866-587-6337 or [shpep@aamc.org](mailto:shpep@aamc.org).

