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## Considerations for Program Directors Planning Virtual Residency Recruitment

### Benefits

- Alleviates financial burden to applicants.
- Creates a broader/larger pool of applicants.
- Allows for coordination of multiple interviewers at multiple sites at a training program.

### Challenges

- Residents may not be able to appreciate the city or the program's campus, amenities, or workspace.
- Screening becomes more important because the number of applications may increase (given the ease with which applicants can attend interviews).
- Applicants will not be given hard copies of program information in person.
- Virtual interviews can be more difficult and emotionally taxing than in-person interviews (i.e. Zoom fatigue).
- Applicants will not have the opportunity for informal socialization with residents.
- Offer half days from which applicants may select a schedule that best accommodates their time zone. May also be accomplished by an app, e.g., SignUpGenius or Thalamus.
- It may be helpful to create a policy for interview cancellations. Specifically, a period after which a candidate would not be able to make changes online and would need to call the program to make a change/cancellation.
- Create a secondary application (sent via email or housed on program website) or conduct a brief phone/video screening interview to screen through the larger applicant pool. Consider including a video segment application (i.e., send questions to be answered via a video response). If screening interviews are used, involve faculty members who have intimate knowledge about the program and will be attuned to specific aspects of resident or program needs.
- If resources allow:
  - Mail informational materials to applicants.
  - Create an online folder with resources.
  - Create video tours of clinical sites and/or the city where your institution is located.
  - Ask residents film a video describing the residency program, their clinical experiences, and what they love about where they live. While professional videos may be desirable, "home" videos allow for residents and faculty to be creative and represent the program authentically.
- Participants may not be able to use and interpret body language as well in the virtual environment.

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## Technical Considerations

- Use a computer or tablet for the interview, not your phone.
- Use a fully charged computer or plug in the computer.
- Turn off all other programs and alarms/notifications on your computer.
- Confirm that your wi-fi connection is working well; position yourself close to the router or use a hardwired connection, if feasible.
- Know how to use basic features of the virtual platform – while most are similar to each other, they nonetheless may have unfamiliar steps, icons, or settings.
- Learn basic troubleshooting, e.g., what to do if you accidentally mute yourself or turn off video.
- Know how to use the chat feature to communicate with the applicant if technical problems with the sound or video arise.

## Creating Your Interview Space

### Setting the Stage

- Find an area free of distractions:
  - Eliminate visual distractions, e.g., moving objects.
  - Avoid sources of potential noise; close windows, turn off alarms and appliances, place your phone on silent (and away from your computer).
- Ensure that you will not be interrupted, including by pets. You may place a “do not disturb” sign on the door of the room where you will be interviewing.
- Seating should be comfortable but look professional, i.e., not a lounge chair. Be mindful of rolling or rotating chairs, you may be inclined to shift and rotate without being aware.

### Background

- Ascertain how your background will appear to the applicant.
  - A spinning ceiling fan can be quite distracting and on occasion dizzying. Ensure that a functioning fan is not in the background.
- A neutral background is often best, i.e., a wall or a clean, uncluttered room. If you would like to include personal items in the background, be careful where they are placed, e.g., items can appear as if emerging from your head.
- If you choose to use an artificial background, ensure that it looks professional and that it does not slow the speed of the video transmission.

### Lighting/Visual

- Adjust your computer so that the camera is head on, at eye-level. This may require raising your computer.



- Adjust lighting beforehand:
  - Avoid bright fluorescent lights.
  - Avoid overhead lighting and backlighting
  - Optimize natural light.
  - Face the source of the light, rather than having it at your back.
- Find the best distance from the camera to position yourself. Your face should not take up the entire screen. However, be close enough so that the interviewer can read your facial expressions.
- Watch out for potential glare from glasses.
- Check your nose and forehead for reflection, subtle makeup (face powder or foundation) on nose and forehead can minimize shine.

## **Interview Day Considerations**

- Designate a support person and provide all interviewers and applicants with their contact information in case of technical difficulties.
  - Include mobile numbers.
  - Establish a preferred means of communication for the day of the interview, e.g., WhatsApp group, text messaging group, email, etc.
- Schedule frequent breaks between interviews and throughout the day. Inform applicants that they should fully treat breaks as down time; let people breathe.
  - Instruct interviewers and applicants to place themselves on mute, turn off video, and leave the virtual meeting.
- Create opportunities for informal interaction between applicants and residents, such as a dinner time video chat with breakout groups.
  - Consider a “dinner” format in which there is a structured larger group activity followed by less structured breakout groups. This may allow for a larger gathering and not as much of a need for too many separate events.
  - Determine the maximum number of applicants that you think you would be able to manage in a virtual environment, and keep in mind the ratio of residents to applicants.
  - It may be more useful to have the social activity and interview closely paired, i.e., within a few days of each other to ensure that the applicant remains interested and immersed in the program.
- Additionally, consider asynchronous activities, e.g., an open house with specific topic (educational sites, curriculum, etc.). This could be structured, with a lecture format and a Q&A. Any materials developed for the session could be posted online.
- Interviewers may need to be more explicit with language as they may not be able to use body language as effectively, e.g., showing interest with a smile or subtly leaning forward may not be noticeable over the virtual interface. Instead, it may be necessary to add verbal feedback such as, “You have proven yourself...” or “I appreciate the passion with which you’re explaining....”



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- On the other hand, bear in mind how body language can be utilized, in the virtual interface, e.g., thumbs up, waving, or exaggerating expressions (as appropriate).
- End the session on time. Another interview may immediately follow your interview.
- Maintain eye contact with the camera - position the interviewer's face directly under the webcam.
- Don't be distracted by watching your own face on video. It will help to maximize the window showing the interviewer's face and minimize the window showing your face.
- Maintain appropriate posture and avoid fidgeting (practice where you will place your hands).
- Pay attention to your hands/arms. If you are accustomed to using your hands when talking, pay attention to not wave them into the camera.
- Remember to smile!
- Keep a bottle of water nearby. If you need to take a sip, turn your head away from the screen as you drink.

## Resources

- [AAMC Virtual Interviews: Tips for Admissions Officers](#)
- [AAMC Virtual Interviews: Tips for Virtual Interviewers](#)

*\*\*\* This sharable material has been created by AAP and free for distribution to others. \*\*\**

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