

**What To Do When Your Program Doesn’t Fill**

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**Prepare before the Match just in case:**

* Have a plan for workflow and interviews if you don’t fill! It does not matter what your plan is, just have one that works for you and your program.

Residency

* If you are a residency program, decide if you are going to participate in SOAP (Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program). Reminder: this must be indicated in the NRMP R3 system ahead of time. Your PD has to be the one to indicate this.
* SOAP can be stressful, but some of your best residents can be found this way and all programs SOAP sometimes. You did not fail if you have to SOAP!
* If you opt not to participate in SOAP, you cannot attempt to fill any open slots until after the Match and SOAP process is complete.
* See page 2 of this handout for SOAP planning tips and tricks

Fellowship

* Have the offer letter ready to send. The time between interviews and offers can move fast.

**When you learn you didn’t fill:**

* First off, don’t panic!

Residency

* Execute the amazing plan you created using SOAP tips and tricks on page 2.

Fellowship

* Fellowships don’t have a SOAP (Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program) so you can control the timeline.
* Get the word out.
  + GME coordinators within and outside your institution
  + AFMA listserv
  + Professional organization job boards (ACGME, AGS, etc.)
* Contact unmatched applicants with a personalized email. In the NRMP website you can run reports of unmatched applicants. Go to the options tab and choose reports. **\*Remember, it is a violation of NRMP policy to share these lists with others**
* Monitor email and phone for inquiries.
* Ask PD, Faculty and Fellows to contact peers in other departments and other institutions.

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* Ask PD, Faculty and Fellows to watch for strong internal candidates that may not match in a highly competitive sub-specialty. Your fellowship may be complimentary and pave a way for them to strengthen their application for next year.

**It’s the long game for Fellowships**

Network throughout the year with rotators on your service.

* Consider off-cycle applicants.
* Consider mid-career physicians.
* Consider an exceptionally qualified candidate. (These are applicants who do not satisfy the Sponsoring Institution’s eligibility policy and/or eligibility requirements in the ACGME’s Common Program Requirements but do meet other selection criteria. Read the section titled, “Fellow Appointments” in your ACGME fellowship requirements for details specific to your fellowship and contact your GME office for further clarification before offering a position.)
* Stay in touch with alumni. Ask them to refer applicants.
* Have faculty and fellows give presentations to other residencies and fellowships both within and outside your institution.
* Build a pipeline with pre-doc and residency both within and outside your department. Invite interested learners to lectures, host journal clubs, etc.

**If all else fails:**

Use this time to strengthen your fellowship. Review curriculum and policies. Explore rotation opportunities.

Applications for the next year will arrive in about 6 months!

**SOAP Tips and Tricks**

1. Create Your SOAP Plan before Match week!
   * Attend any webinars offered by ERAS/NRMP on SOAP and review policies and timelines on the NRMP website. Remember, SOAP is not another Match.
   * Add important SOAP dates to your calendar.
   * Decide who your SOAP team is going to be and block their schedules on Tue/Wed/Thur of SOAP week.
     + Review NRMP SOAP policies with the team. Make sure everyone understands the rules.
   * Confirm your eligibility criteria for SOAP applicants. As a rule, the basic eligibility criteria should not be different for SOAP than it is for regular applicants. Sometimes there are extraordinarily qualified candidates that you might encounter, and these would need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
   * Decide your SOAP interview questions/scoring.
     + Keep it concise. 5-6 questions max.
     + Keep scoring simple – Yes preference list, or No preference list, with a choice for candidates who are very highly rated if you choose to do so.
   * Decide what format you want to use for interviewing SOAP applicants (Phone/Zoom/Teams etc).
   * Decide on length of interviews and goal number of SOAP interviews per open slot (Generally, more is better, but it will depend on your number of unfilled slots) 10-12 interviews per open slot is a good guideline. 15-30 minutes is typically enough time to interview an applicant.
   * Decide how you want to schedule SOAP interviews and what the schedule will look like
     + *Sign Up Genius* is a great option for this. Applicants really liked being able to sign up for a specific time slot. The basic account for Sign Up Genius if free to use which is also plus!
     + One option is to create a multi person schedule and just have breakout rooms on a video call. This will save time by allowing more than one candidate to interview simultaneously.
     + Because SOAP interviews can be scheduled/cancelled quickly, creating a shared schedule document that can be updated in real time will also help keep everyone up to date on schedules.
   * Review your attributes/custom statuses in ERAS and add any that you think will be helpful for SOAP
     + Ex: “Yes SOAP interview”, “No SOAP interview”, “Yes SOAP preference list”, “No SOAP preference list”
     + Make sure you do this before Match week, as ERAS will be unavailable to programs in the SOAP until Tuesday morning.
2. The Week of SOAP
   * Monday
     + Once notified of unfilled slots, program wait one day, while applicants prepare their applications.
     + Use this time to confirm your SOAP team is ready to start review applications on Tuesday, and that your plan is in place.
   * Tuesday-Wednesday
     + Begin reviewing applications (if you are on the West Coast, this will be very early!)
     + Start inviting applicants to interview as soon as you are ready. If possible, start doing interviews on Tuesday, and continue Wed all day/half day depending on your number of unfilled slots.
     + PD can begin creating SOAP preference list on Tuesday.
   * Thursday
     + SOAP rounds begin. Make sure the preference list is certified prior to each SOAP round.
     + SOAP ends on Thursday afternoon.
   * Friday
     + Match Day! Announce your new residents and congratulate yourself on a job well done.
     + Once Match and SOAP officially concludes, you can attempt to fill any open slots through other means. The majority of programs that participate in SOAP are able to fill their open slots within the SOAP.
3. Other tips
   * Make sure you are taking care of yourself. SOAP can be exhausting. Gather your snacks, coffee/tea, water bottle and anything else you need to get through the week.
   * Wear something comfortable. You are going to have some long days at the office.
   * Let others in your institution know that you and your program colleagues are going to be on a tight timeline if you end up doing SOAP, so other meetings may need to be rescheduled that week.
   * You are not alone! Take advantage of ERAS and NRMP support for any technical questions. Reach out to your fellow administrators too. People are happy to help.