

Shadowing and Observation

Tips for success from the
CHS Student Success Center



How do I get started?

Use Your Network. Do you have any contacts, family, or friends (or friends of friends) who are working in the profession you want to pursue? If so, reach out to these individuals to see if they will allow you to shadow them.

Research Locations and Professionals. If you do not know anyone you can contact within your personal network, begin reaching out to practicing professionals in the community. Do an online search for facilities/providers based on the profession and area you would like to shadow (for example, Physical Therapists in Johnson City, TN). Identify multiple potential shadowing sites and record their contact information (address, phone number, and email address).

Create a Tracking System. Before you begin reaching out to professionals, create a system to track the places you plan to reach out to, when you contacted them, and the responses you receive. (We suggest using an Excel spread sheet!) This will keep you organized and prevent you from accidentally contacting a location multiple times.

Plan Your Initial Contact. Reaching out by phone or in person may receive more positive responses than sending an email. However you plan to reach out, create a short “elevator pitch” about who you are, what your goals are, and why you are interested in shadowing. It may also help to have a resume prepared to send to possible shadowing locations. (Hint: Visit ETSU’s [University Career Services](#) office for help constructing your resume!)

Visit, Call, or Email...and Follow Up! You will likely have to reach out to multiple locations before you get a firm “yes” to a request to shadow. If you do not hear back from an organization or contact within a week, it is appropriate to send a follow-up email or call again. However, you may have to search for new locations if your initial outreach is unsuccessful. Don’t get discouraged...this process can be challenging and may take time!

Creating a Successful Shadowing Experience

Get prepared. Once you have secured a shadowing opportunity, work out the details. Make sure you know what attire you should wear and when you should arrive, and ask if you need to complete any paperwork or do anything else to prepare for the experience.

Get the most out of shadowing. Come to your experience prepared with a pen and notebook to write down any questions or record any thoughts/observations during your experience. Be engaged, and ask questions when appropriate. Make sure to avoid using your phone while you are shadowing.

Log your shadowing/observation hours. Many graduate/professional healthcare programs require or highly suggest a minimum number of observation hours prior to applying. Be sure to create a log to document when,

where, who, and how many hours you observe, and have the professional you observe sign in. Ethically and honestly record observation hours as only those you spent directly observing a professional (not cleaning, doing front office work, etc.)

Seek variety and new opportunities. Rather than shadowing in one setting, seek to shadow in a variety of settings (inpatient, outpatient, schools) and with a variety of populations (children, adults, the elderly, etc.).

Sample Phone Script

If they answer your call:

Hi! My name is [your name], and I am a [year in school] studying [major/pre-health path] at ETSU. I'm interested in shadowing a [profession] this semester. I was wondering if your facility is interested or able to accommodate a student observer.

Prepare answers to the following possible questions:

- What experience do you have in _____?
- What is your GPA?
- Why here/this office/this facility/this specialty area?
- When do you want to start?
- When do you want to work?

If they want to take your contact information and get back to you: Great, thank you for your consideration! You can reach me at [email address] or [phone number]. I would also be happy to email you a resume if that would be helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

If they say they cannot accommodate your request: I understand. Thank you for your time and have a great week.

Sample Email Script

Hello,

My name is [your name], and I am a [year in school] studying [major/pre-health path] at ETSU. I am interested in shadowing a [profession] this semester. I was wondering if your facility is interested or able to accommodate a student observer.

[Briefly include some additional information about yourself. For example, include your GPA (if high), related experience, why you want to observe/shadow at this particular place, and/or your availability.]

I have attached a resume for your review. You can reach me at [email address] or [phone number]. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you so much for your consideration!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]