

While some professional schools, particularly Physician Assistant and Nursing Programs, will require a certain number of hours of clinical experience, medical schools do not specify any requirement to gain clinical experience but they do expect to see that you have reality tested this idea and that you have exposed yourself to what it would be to work in a clinical setting. They will likely review your portfolio with questions similar to these in mind:

- ❖ Has the applicant acquired pertinent healthcare exposure, such as engagement in volunteer activities or clinical experience?
- ❖ Has the applicant begun cultivating effective interpersonal skills and the capability to attend to individuals from varied backgrounds with diverse medical requirements?
- ❖ Is the applicant prepared to navigate hospital and clinical settings, and effectively collaborate as a team member within these environments?
- ❖ Where does this applicant see themselves in the future? Is this based on personal experience?

| | |
|---|--|
| <u>Shadowing</u> | A brief, observational opportunity to explore a specific specialty by shadowing a physician in their daily routine. This experience provides a chance to observe physician-patient interactions, discuss the profession's rewards and challenges, and gain insights into your own career preferences. |
| <u>Hospital / Clinic volunteering</u> | A more extended, hands-on opportunity where you contribute services to the hospital/clinic. This experience allows you to grasp the culture within a specific hospital unit over an extended period, engage with the team comprising nurses, technicians, physicians, and more. In certain units, there's the potential for direct interaction with patients and their families. |
| <u>Volunteering</u> | An extended, hands-on opportunity with patient populations beyond the hospital/clinic environment, such as working at a nursing home, assisted living residence, hospice, disaster relief efforts, etc. |
| <u>Becoming an EMT</u> | After a course and certification test, Emergency Medical Technicians respond to emergency situations. Great opportunity to gain hands-on skills, but does not provide familiarity with the hospital setting or work of physicians. Visit <u>Bard EMS</u> for more information. |
| <u>Becoming a CNA</u> | After a course and certification test, Certified Nursing Assistants work alongside nurses to provide direct care to patients. Training is available through community colleges and through care facilities like nursing homes. Check your state's Department of Health for a list of training facilities. |
| <u>Scribing</u> | Paid position in which you follow doctors as they visit with patients and take notes for them, so that they can focus on the patient. |

Shadowing Health Professionals

Shadowing is a valuable way to gain exposure to how a doctor thinks and what their work looks like day to day. Working closely with a healthcare provider and his/her staff in an office helps you to learn about expectations in the field and the challenges and rewards of practicing medicine. A shadowing experience also allows you to build a relationship with a mentor in the field and ask questions, ultimately helping you to decide if this path is the right one for you.

You spend time learning from watching a physician interact with patients. Generally, shadowing is a shorter-term experience; after a few days, you've gained a fair amount of insight on how that doctor does her work. To complement the insights gained from shadowing, we recommend seeking experience where you have an active role and personal responsibility for being a part of the healthcare team, even if your role is as simple as making sure that beds are made and patients have water. Additionally, shadowing is largely a passive experience and is mainly for your benefit. We encourage you to supplement your shadowing experience with something more hands-on that helps others. It may be that the physician you plan to shadow already has this in mind and will allow you to sit with patients or their families as they wait for the physician or assist administrative staff with tasks – pure shadowing is a good first step, but something where you are able to contribute to and not just benefit from the clinical experience is recommended. After all, part of the reason you want to be a doctor is to help others – demonstrate that interest by finding ways that you can help!

A group of medical school personnel, prehealth advisers, ethicists, and others have collaborated to develop [Guidelines for Clinical Shadowing Experiences for Pre-medical Students](#).

Check out the profiles of more than 17,000 alumnae/i on the [Bard College](#) and [Bard CDO](#) LinkedIn pages where you can search for alumnae/i by employer, location, industry, and more.

When you contact a physician, tell the person where you found them, give a brief introduction of yourself, and what in particular interests you about their background, position, or organization. Let the doctor know that you'd be interested in any shadowing opportunities that they can provide. If your first contact is by email, attach a copy of your resume and let them know that you're happy to connect by phone if it's helpful. If your first contact is by phone, have your calendar available in case the physician wants to schedule something right away. Try to have an idea of what you're looking for when you shadow in case you are asked.

If the doctor can't accommodate you for shadowing, you might see if they would just be willing to talk with you for an hour or so, and then put together a list of questions you might like to know more about in pursuing your interests in medicine (this is often called an "[informational interview](#)").

Bard students interested in shadowing at Northern Dutchess Hospital should complete this [Interest Form](#)

Hospital / Clinic volunteering

Sometimes students will say that volunteering at a hospital is boring or uninteresting... You probably want to focus on the things you do enjoy about being in the clinical setting and not the things that are tedious or uninteresting. Medical schools do not require hospital volunteering per se, but they do value applicants with experience interacting with patients, and before one goes to medical school and obtains proper qualifications and skills, one is left with volunteering as the main means for gaining patient contact.

A few things to remember: If your frustration comes from a lack of contact with physicians, and the patients you see are asleep, then you're volunteering at a less than optimal time of day. When scheduling your volunteer work, think beyond what is best for your schedule. Volunteer in the mornings or afternoons, possibly on weekends if you have to, not late in the evening when the docs have gone home and the patients are sleeping.

Students often experience more than they realize when serving as a volunteer. Write down your experiences. Spend a little time recording conversations you've had with patients or conversations you've overheard between doctors and staff. The more detailed you are with your note-taking, the better equipped/informed you'll be when asked to discuss your volunteer work. (It may even help you better understand why you're volunteering in the first place.)

Lastly, remember this isn't about you doing something you find interesting as much as it is about backing up your desire to work in a profession where serving others is at the heart of all you do. To be blunt, it's not about you, it's about what needs to be done in order to help a hospital help its patients. Tasks like comforting patients, talking with them and their families, transporting them, etc. are essential experiences in your development as a caregiver.

Volunteering

Bard students interested in volunteering at Northern Dutchess Hospital should complete this [Interest Form](#)

Civic Engagement and Service

Beyond clinical experience, participating in civic engagement in various settings, such as tutoring, coaching kids, or assisting the elderly, is also highly appreciated. Don't reject these opportunities simply because you may think medical schools won't find them relevant. It's crucial to step outside the traditional medical setting and equip yourself to provide care to a diverse patient population.

Fundamentally, medicine is a service-oriented profession. By choosing to become a physician, you're making a commitment to positively impact the lives of others. However, there's no need to delay making a difference until you achieve that goal. Engaging in service demonstrates your dedication to the community and society, offers a chance to understand diverse populations and social issues, and aids in the development of crucial communication and interpersonal skills.

What is our definition of Civic Engagement?

Civic engagement is a call to action. For people and institutions to work on behalf of the public good (concern) and respond in partnership to address social issues. Bard takes the call to action seriously and acts as a private institution in the public interest.

The [Bard Center for Civic Engagement](#) realizes Bard's vision to act as a private institution in the public interest. CCE initiates programs, fosters sustained partnerships, and supports and connects student, faculty, and staff of Bard's local, national, and international networks as they work to make a difference in the civic life of their communities.