



AMERICAN  
**ORTHOPAEDIC**  
ASSOCIATION

## **AOA/CORD Clarifies NRMP Agreement, Especially Regarding Interviews**

**Letter sent to CORD Affiliates on September 26, 2022**

Dear CORD Affiliates,

As orthopaedic surgery residency programs begin to register for the NRMP Match, it has come to our attention there is a perceived discrepancy between the “NRMP Codes of Conduct” and the “Match Participation Agreement for Programs.” To clarify these points and to try to dispel any confusion, AOA Executive Director Kristin Glavin, Esq. and I met with the NRMP Policy Compliance team on September 22, 2022. Following are the results of the call.

The two main points of confusion are:

1. Ability (within confines of the current NRMP Agreement and Code of Conduct for Programs) of programs to offer both virtual and in-person interviews.
2. The required 48-hour window provided to students for scheduling interviews.

### **OFFERING BOTH VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS**

The NRMP Codes of Conduct are specifically drafted to describe ethical and professionally responsible behavior intended to support equity and reduce bias in the Match process. The Codes state: “To promote the highest ethical and professional standards, program directors and members of the recruitment team participating in a Match **must...**”

- Engage in recruitment activities that promote transparency and wellness
  - Minimizing bias by conducting interviews in-person or virtually, **but not both...**”

However, the initial paragraph of the NRMP Codes of Conduct states: “This Code of Conduct should serve as a **guide** for residency and fellowship program directors and all members of the recruitment team participating in a Match.”

The NRMP Match Participation Agreement for Programs (“Agreement”), signed by Program leadership and enforceable by the NRMP, does not specifically incorporate the Code of Conduct for Programs into the Agreement, but references the Code and specifies that Programs and Program leadership must act in an ethical and professionally responsible manner. Investigations and sanctions are defined in the Agreement for violation of terms.

In conversation with the NRMP on September 22, Laurie Curtin, NRMP Chief of Policy clarified, “Recommendations are in the Code; Requirements are in the Agreement.” Ms. Curtin said the NRMP will always investigate any possible match violations, but also said:

- In all instances, programs should strive to create as much equity as possible during recruitment.

- If NRMP is notified of a possible infraction of the code, the NRMP will consider mitigating circumstances during their investigation.

The mitigating circumstances we discussed regarding the potential for orthopaedic surgery residency programs to offer both in-person and virtual interviews were:

- Health reasons
- Institutional requirement to offer “some virtual interview spots”
- Home institution / rotating students

As a reminder, the [AOA/CORD Residency Recruitment Guidelines](#) include recommendations that encourage programs to adhere to the most equitable recruitment process possible. Therefore, in final analysis following this discussion with NRMP, **CORD maintains its recommendation that programs must determine the most equitable process for offering in-person and/or virtual interviews and acknowledges that the three potential mitigating circumstances listed above may impact the program’s decision-making process.** We encouraged the NRMP to consider clarifying these points in future Match Codes/Agreement and to immediately address these issues for the current Match cycle in more specific FAQs, and they said they will consider revising and updating their FAQs in the coming weeks.

#### **REQUIREMENT OF 48-HOURS FOR APPLICANTS TO ACCEPT OR REJECT INTERVIEW INVITATIONS**

The Agreement states in #6.2 Interview Period: “During the recruitment phase, programs shall: ...2. Provide applicants no less than 48 hours to accept or reject an interview invitation...”

As you are likely aware, the 48-hour period has been built into the [AOA/CORD Universal Interview Offer Day](#) recommendations and are in compliance with the NRMP agreement. The recommendations include:

- A recommended 24-hour moratorium between the time when interviews are offered and when applicants are able to accept the offer, giving the applicants time to create an interview plan with their advisers.
- 48 hours for applicants to accept the offers.
- Encouragement for programs to send to applicants on Universal Offer Day (November 14, 2022) invitation, waitlist, and rejection letters so that applicants are fully aware of their application status.

During the call with NRMP, we encouraged them to revise their statement in the Agreement because many programs receive over 1,000 applications. Programs often first offer interviews to a group of applicants and place some applicants on a waiting list. If in the first round, an applicant does not wish to schedule an interview, the program will then offer an interview to an applicant on the waiting list. But at that point, waiting another 48 hours for subsequent rounds of interview offers is problematic given the short timelines on which many programs are working and the students’ resultant stress in quickly scheduling interviews, some of which may require travel.

Ms. Curtin applauded the AOA/CORD’s UOD process for including the 24-hour moratorium, saying that she is unaware of many other specialties encouraging the same type of moratorium. However, in response to this issue, NRMP said that **every applicant must be provided no less than 48 hours to**

**respond to every interview invitation they are offered**, and they will investigate any potential infractions brought to their attention.

If you have any questions or additional points of concern, please post your comments/questions to the CORD Exchange online discussion forum or send a message to [cord@aoassn.org](mailto:cord@aoassn.org). AOA/CORD is committed to being proactive in helping to create the most equitable and successful orthopaedic surgery residency match for this upcoming season and into the future.

Thank you for taking the time to attend to these important issues.

Sincerely,

Tessa Balach, MD, FAOA  
Chair, CORD/Academics Committee