

HEALTH ADVOCACY PRACTICUM (HAP) FAQ

HAP is a core course in the first and second years of medical school, focused on learning about social determinants of health, health disparities and trauma-responsive care. The major focus of the course is a community-based practicum experience, through which students learn from the lived experiences of their community partners, and develop and apply basic health coaching and health advocacy skills.

What is the difference between HAP and HA2?

HAP: The community practicum takes place two to three afternoons/month, from October through May. Students choose from a number of different community site options, serving people who are experiencing homelessness, youth from low-income families, older adults, refugees, and people with medical or intellectual disability impacted by high social need. Settings include residential, school, community, medical and other organizational sites.

HA2: A sequel to the Year 1 Health Advocacy, HA2 takes a deeper dive into key social determinants of health. Health advocacy means supporting the wellbeing and resilience of people and their communities, particularly in the face of social adversity. We take a structural view, inquiring into key economic, social and political structures that perpetuate health disparities and injustices that cause injury, accelerate disease and drive premature death. Students link structural challenges with strategies for more effective micro-advocacy (regarding individual patients); meso-advocacy (regarding neighborhoods and communities); and macro-advocacy (regarding health policy and societal change).

What kind of placements will I get to choose from?

We work with over 50 community sites and clinics throughout the Philadelphia metro area and over 25 sites and clinics in the West Reading area. Populations vary, such as kindergarteners from low-income families, older adults, high school students, young adults without a high school education, people with chronic medical conditions, people who experience homelessness, people with addictions, etc.

How are students assigned? Will I have a say in where I am assigned?

At the beginning of the year, we ask all students to review the list of site possibilities and then send us their top five choices. We ask students to only list sites where they would be willing to be placed. Given that there are over 260 students who need placements, there are many factors that go into assignments, including student interest, access to transportation, home location, language skills and site needs.

Are all assignments equal in terms of time/expectations?

No. Activities vary with each placement and are based on what is best for the community partners. That means some placements will have fewer visits, and some will have more frequent sessions. Some students who have less frequent visits will have additional assignments to complete.



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Do I need a car?

Some community sites are located close to Queen Lane, but some are not within walking distance. Having a car makes transportation easier, but without one, it's still possible to get to your site by carpooling with other students, using the Drexel shuttle, or taking public transportation. When possible, the locations for community site options are included on the site description list.

What will I be doing at my HAP site?

It depends on your placement. Here are some scenarios:

You are assigned to work one on one with a hospice patient. You will visit that person two to three times per month, and use that time to get to know that person as they reflect on their life. Maybe you'll read to them or spend time playing games.

You are assigned with a teammate to an older adult or a person living with chronic illness or a physical disability. You and your teammate will visit that person two to three times per month, and use that time to get to know them and what it's like to live with physical limitations. You might help that person with any questions about their health or health care, or about benefits. You might help that person reflect on their life and develop a legacy project.

You and a small group of other students are assigned to work with high school students who are learning to be certified nursing assistants. As a team, you will develop lessons on physiological systems, health careers or educational goals. You will lead the group when they visit your campus.

You might be assigned to help out with homework at a homeless shelter, or to tutor a high schooler who will be the first in her family to college, or to help a formerly homeless man living in a long-term shelter write a resume or prepare for a job interview.

HAP is designed so that future doctors understand that health does not spring from an exam room or a prescription. Just as there are many non-biological factors that impede good health, there are also hundreds of ways to help someone feel better.

Do I visit my community partner at their home? Are there other locations I may visit with my community partner?

You and your community partner will decide what makes the most sense for where your visits will take place. Some people may want to meet with you when they visit their doctor. Some people might prefer to meet with you in their home.

What happens if I have to change my placement for some reason?

We want your assignment to be a good fit. If you need to be reassigned, we will work with you to help you be best situated.

How is HAP conducted during the COVID19 pandemic?

We have a good mix of in-person, hybrid, and remote opportunities for all students. For those sites that will be in-person, all safety precautions are in place. Students will be able to choose a site based on their comfort level.



Get in touch!

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