2024-25

Applicant Preference Signaling FAQs

Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology



What is preference signaling?

Preference signaling, also known as program signaling, is a process where applicants can indicate a heightened level of interest in a program by sending the program a signal in the residency match process. When you submit your application, you can select specific programs to signal your heightened interest.

Have other medical specialties used preference signaling in their selection process? How was it received by applicants?

ENT piloted preference signaling in the 2021 match cycle. They found that the addition of preference signals dramatically increased the chance an applicant received an interview from the programs they signaled. This benefit extended across the spectrum of applicant competitiveness and demographics. 77% of applicants indicated they thought preference signaling was a positive change to the match process.

In the 2022 match cycle, Urology, Dermatology, General Surgery, and Internal Medicine also incorporated preference signaling into their match process. The response from applicants in those specialties was similarly positive.

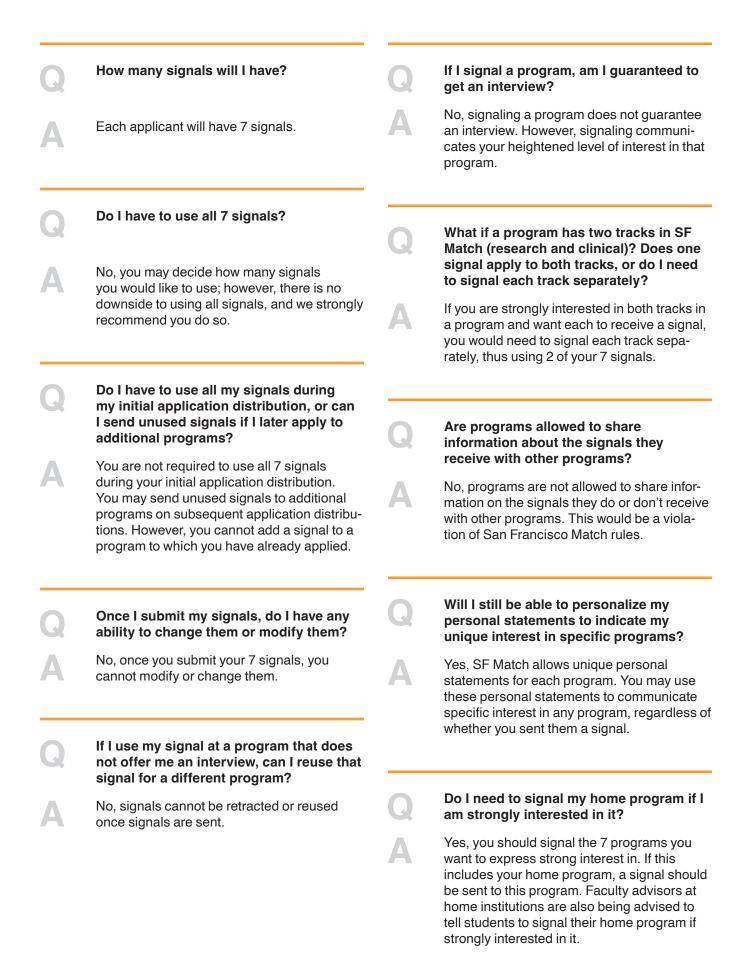
In the 2024 residency match cycle, 21 specialties, including ophthalmology, will participate in program signaling.

How will programs use my signals?

Each program will decide for itself how, when, and whether to use signals in its selection process. There is no uniform or prescriptive method for integrating signals into their evaluation process.

How do I submit my signals to the programs I am interested in?

When you prepare your application in SF Match, you will have the opportunity to select up to seven programs you want to signal. Your signals will be delivered to the programs when you submit your application.



Should I signal programs at which I complete an away rotation?

Yes, you should signal the 7 programs you want to express strong interest in. If you rotate at a program where you have a strong interest, you should signal that program. Programs are receiving the same advice to expect a signal from rotating away students if the student wants to communicate their heightened interest.

Are there recommendations for how to use my signals?

You should signal the 7 programs you want to communicate your heightened interest in. The decision on which programs to send signals should be tailored to your individual needs and preferences. Consult with your advisors on how best to strategically use your signals. Relevant factors may include personal/family needs, career goals, geographic preferences, and the relative competitiveness of the applicant.

Do I need to confirm that a program has received my signal?

No, when you submit your application with your assigned signals, the signals will automatically be delivered to the programs.

Are programs allowed to advise me to send or not send them a signal?

Programs are not allowed to advise applicants whether they should signal their program. Even if you think a program knows of your heightened interest, you should signal them if they are in the top 7 programs you are interested in.

Will applicants who signaled a program be ranked higher on the final rank list than those who did not?

Every program will incorporate these signals into its selection process differently. How applicants are ranked on the final rank list will be at the discretion of each program.

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Will programs tell us how they plan to use the signals they receive (for example, post their plan for using signals on a website), or can we call to inquire?

Programs may decide to publicize how they will use their signals, but it is not mandatory. Be mindful that this process is new. Many programs do not yet know if or how they will use the signals. They may also change how they utilize signals throughout the process. We do not recommend contacting programs to inquire about how they intend to use their signals.

We encourage any program that has decided definitively not to use signals in its selection process to make that information easily accessible to applicants.