



***Residency Guide:  
Preparation for Phase II of the Match***

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Compiled by the New Practitioners Forum Resident Advancement Advisory Group:

Jennifer Alastanos, PharmD, BCPP

Matt Bilhimer, PharmD

Ashley Bowden, PharmD

Amanda Grego, PharmD

Dylan Lindsay, PharmD

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# Phase II of the Match

## Preparation Guide for Applicants

**Match list submitted? Don't just sit and wait.**



March can feel like a long month when applying for residency. At the beginning of the month, you submit your final rank list and wait weeks for that day called “Match Day.” Despite its name, approximately 35% of applicants will not match. Applicants might feel embarrassed, disappointed, or confused. These are all emotions candidates are expected to process quickly so they can move onto preparation for Phase II. This document has been created to help all candidates prepare for this time prior to Match Day to ensure they have the time necessary to be fully prepared for Phase II.

### Prepare for Phase II Prior to Match Day

#### Reflection

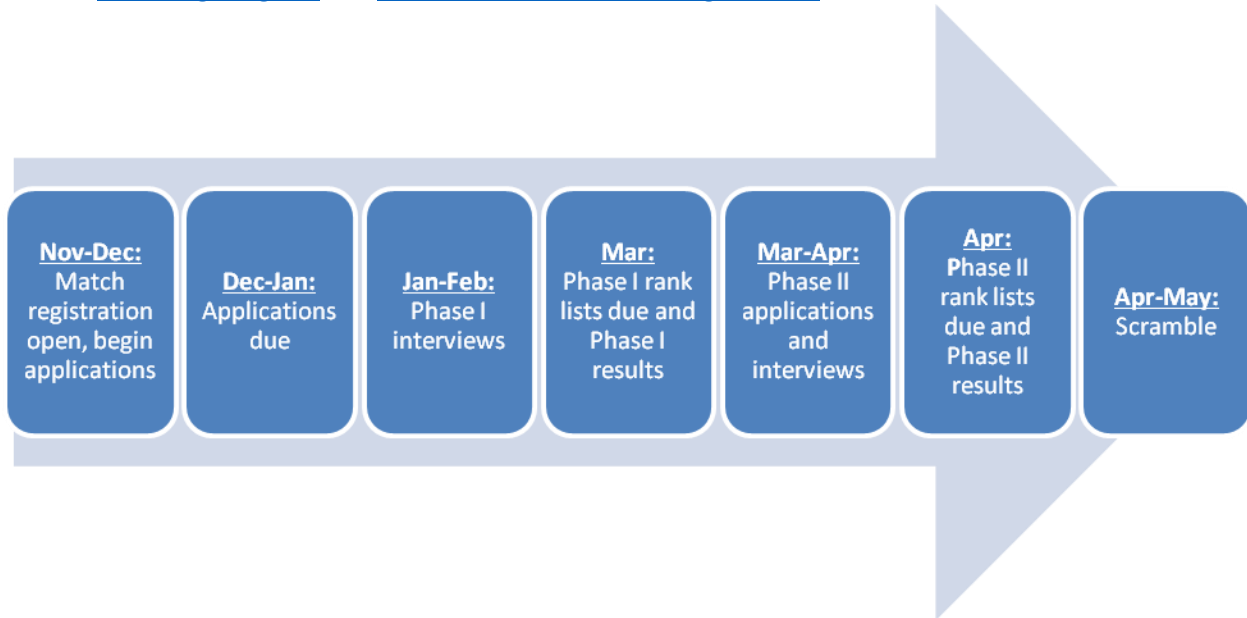
- Take time to consider all of the elements that lead up to Match Day before it is here.
- Reflect on your additional rotations and interview experiences.
  - Has your perspective on your ideal residency or your future career goals changed at all and how will that impact your decisions during Phase II of the Match?
- Consider the following:
  - Application – what were your areas of strength and areas of weakness.
  - Interviews – what went well and what can you improve.
  - Career goals – what is your ultimate goal and are there other paths to achieve it.

#### Create a Plan

- Create a specific Phase II plan after Phase I rankings are submitted so you are prepared regardless of the results.
  - Talk to friends, family, and mentors about a backup plan.
  - Consider what other options are available if you do not match
    - Is Phase II right for you?
    - If you are considering Phase II what approach will you take?
    - Should you consider pursuing a job instead of a residency?
    - If you are considering pursuing a job what type of practice setting do you see yourself in?
  - Have a few different plans in place so that you are not panicked if plan A does not work out and you can easily move to plan B.

## Residency Timeline

- For more information on the specific dates and deadlines each year, refer to [ASHP Resident Matching Program](#) and [PhORCAS National Matching Services](#).



## Reflections of Phase I

Are you preparing for Phase II? Now is the time to reflect on your experiences leading up to Phase I and identify aspects of your application that can be easily and quickly improved. Consider the following to jumpstart your self-evaluation:

- How do you think your interviews went?
- Is there someone you trust that was present at your interview(s), such as a mentor, that can assist in re-evaluating your performance (e.g., body language, answers to questions)?
- Review criteria used to apply to programs in Phase I of the Match (location, residency type, rotations offered) and consider expanding your search.
- What does your “gut” instinct tell you? Is there something you think you would have changed if you had a second chance?

### **Reevaluate your Personal and Professional Goals**

- Take time to reflect on your personal and professional goals
  - Focus on why you want to complete a residency.
- Decide if completing a residency is an absolute necessity to reach your career goals or if you should begin searching for alternative career paths.
- Consider the key components you are looking for in a residency program to achieve your personal and professional goals.
  - Determine which factors are negotiable and which are required.
  - Use these components as a guide to determine which available positions to apply to during Phase II of the Match.

### **Utilize your Mentor**

Not matching in Phase I can be an isolating experience and your mentors can provide the reassurance you deserve and owe yourself during this time. Ask mentors in advance to set aside time on Match Day or the following weekend to be available to meet in the event you don't match. Consider asking your mentors and recommendation writers' questions such as:

- Do you know of other pharmacists that failed to match but were successful in Phase II and/or the Scramble? If so, can you describe the steps they took to navigate the post-Match process?
  - Even if your mentor doesn't know a pharmacist personally, consider reading some of the ASHP blogs listed in [Additional Resources](#) for perspectives and guidance.
- Can you provide some perspective on not matching?
- What personal qualities do you think I can emphasize going into Phase II of the Match?
- Do you think there is any aspect of my personality that may have contributed to not matching (e.g., over-confidence, quiet nature, unprofessional commentary, informal attire/attitude) that I can work on improving?

### **Network with Others**

You've probably heard it before, but remember that pharmacy is a small world. Take the time to learn more about your preceptors' and/or professors' education and training if they are willing to share. This information can become a huge asset during Phase II of the Match. By networking with them, you can have a quick resource to discuss possible open positions at their alma mater. Also, if they are well networked they might know someone at a program that you want to know more about. Nothing is better than a personal perspective for the short period of time you have to evaluate programs in Phase II of the Match.

## **Update your Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

- Things have likely changed since December/January, so make sure to update your CV to reflect these changes:
  - Update your list of completed rotations, presentations delivered, any additional certifications you might have acquired, or anything you completed in the past you may have previously forgotten. These might be experiences potential programs or employers are looking for!
- If you have not already done so, check the [ASHP CV Review Sheet](#) for formatting recommendations and minimum expectations for individual section content.
- Does your format highlight those experiences that align with your goals whether it is a residency or job position?
  - List sections you want to highlight closer to the beginning of your CV, and keep in mind your formatting may change depending on whether you are applying for a residency versus a job. Examples to consider:
    - You may want to list summer internships before IPPE and APPE rotations when applying for a community or hospital staff position versus highlighting your clinical experiences if applying to a residency position.
    - Highlight research experiences if applying to a fellowship position.
    - Focus on teaching experiences if applying to a position in academia.
- Have multiple people review your CV as possible. You are more likely to receive feedback you have not heard before and avoid typos previously overlooked by asking different people to look over your CV versus.
- If you submitted to the spring cycle of the [ASHP CV Review Program](#), consider reaching out to your assigned reviewers to request an abbreviated timeline for feedback. Be polite and professional in your interactions, as reviewers are not obligated to accommodate such requests. Always remember to say thank in all interactions with your reviewers!

## **Continued Professional Development**

- Optimize the time between completing interviews and the results of Phase I of the Match to enhance your CV in preparation for Phase II of the Match.
- Are there additional experiences that you can gain on your rotations or at work that will improve your application for Phase II of the Match?
  - Does your preceptor or boss have a task that they need help with? This can provide an opportunity for you to gain experience while reducing their workload.
- Are there available certificate programs, webinars, or continuing education in your area of interest that you can complete during this time frame?
- Consider volunteering with local pharmacy organizations or organizing an event.

## **Rethink your References**

Many Phase II of the Match applicants use the same references from Phase I, but recommendations are possibly a big component of why they did not get an interview or position the first time.

### Evaluate Phase I Recommenders

- Did you ask your Phase I references to write you a positive recommendation?
- Does the person who wrote you a recommendation know you? Can they speak to the skills you would offer as a pharmacy resident?
  - A reference from the Dean of the College of Pharmacy may say you are a student who is very involved, a lab researcher may speak to your great skills in bench top research, or a philosophy teacher may state you are an insightful person. These may be good qualities, but these references do not necessarily provide direct information on your abilities to be a successful health-system pharmacy resident.
- Did you have a well-balanced set of references? Consider including a boss or someone that has known you for a long period of time, a preceptor or co-worker that can speak to your clinical skills, and then either another preceptor or faculty member.

### Pick More Relevant Recommenders

- You had to submit your application in January, and now it is March. You have probably had another rotation or two. Did you do an outstanding job on one of these rotations? Are they more relevant to the position you are applying for?
  - Eg., BB is applying for residencies at children’s hospitals and he did not have his pediatric rotation until February. He was so engaged that he received the highest mark at the end of the rotation. BB should consider adding this preceptor as a reference.

### Approach to a New Phase II Recommender

- If you are interested in having a new reference, talk to the reference. Do not have them write anything yet, but create the dialogue. “If I don’t match in Phase I, would you mind writing me a reference for Phase II? If so, I would need your reference within a week. Is this feasible for you?”
  - By notifying them in advance, this reference can discuss your career goals and get your CV (note: another person to review your CV) so they have everything they need to write a good recommendation quickly.



## **Update your Letter of Intent (LOI)**

- A letter of intent should be brief, yet sincere and engaging, which can be a difficult balance for many applicants to obtain. In general, a letter of intent should not exceed one page (two at the most), and should lay out for the program the following information:
  - What your objective is.
  - Why you are interested in the program.
  - How specific aspects of the residency cater to your short and long-term career goals.
  - How your specific past experiences will allow you to excel within that particular program.
- Ensure your cover letter is written for the specific residency program
  - Does your cover letter discuss how interested you are in taking care of children and neonates? If so, is this a letter you submitted adult only hospitals?
- Similar to your CV, consider having multiple people review your LOI.
- For example letters of intent for various practice settings, refer to [Additional Resources](#)

<b>Letter of Intent Do's</b>		
Be direct	Be brief	Be genuine
Be specific	Use active rather than passive voice	Be aggressive in the editing process

<b>Letter of Intent Do Not's</b>		
Use jargon or slang	Use abbreviations	Use flowery language
Use a blanket letter for applying to all programs	Use example LOIs available as your own	Provide vague examples

## **Prepare for Phase II Interviews**

- Based on your Phase I interview experiences, if you felt interview skills were an area where you needed to improve, consider scheduling a mock interview with a mentor or preceptor.
- Reflect back on interview questions that may have stumped you during the first round and consider how you could have answered the question better.
  - You may even want to write a list of difficult interview questions after each interview during Phase I so you have a new list of interview questions to review prior to Phase II.
- Prepare for different styles of interviews during Phase II of the Match (face to face, one on one phone call, group conference call, Skype, FaceTime, Microsoft Lync)
- Consider asking for time off from rotation to prepare and complete Phase II interviews.
- Interview duration may be much shorter, so use your time wisely and have your questions prepared.
- Consider emailing thank you's in follow-up as the short time line likely will not allow for hand written thank you notes to reach your interviewers in time.
- For more information on how to best prepare for an interview refer to [Additional Resources](#).
- Search and review more interview questions to prepare for
  - Have a list of experiences that can be applied to different situational questions, such as:

Topics for Situational Questions		
Conflict	Patient impact	Recommendations accepted
Recommendation not accepted	Working with a group	Leadership
Time management	Going above and beyond expectations	Stressful situation

- Questions about these situations may be phrased similar to these examples:
  - Tell us about a patient encounter in which you learned something from. Is there an example you are the most proud of?
  - Give an example of a time you were a part of a great team. What was your role and what did you learn from that experience?
  - Describe a time you encountered an angry or difficult patient or hospital staff member. How did you handle the situation?
  - Name a time you completed a difficult task or a time there was a problem. How did you resolve it?

### **Additional Resources**

- Overall Residency Resources
  - ASHP Publication: [Get the Residency: ASHP’s Guide to Residency Interviews and Preparation](#)
    - Includes information on each step from Midyear Clinical Meeting to Match Day and after.
  - [ASHP Career Transitions Page](#)
    - Includes information from updating your curriculum vitae to interview tips and post-Match advice regardless of the outcome.
- Phase II of the Match Specific Resources
  - [Round 2: The Second Match Phase and You](#) (PSHP News Article)
  - [Riche DM, Douglas KS, Sewell J. Implications of ASHP’s phase II Match process. Am J Health Syst Pharm. 2016;73\(21\):1720-21.](#) (AJHP Publication)
- ASHP Connect Blogs on Residency and The Match
  - [Phase II of the Match](#)
  - [What I want to say to students who did not match](#)
  - [The Match, The Scramble, The Residency](#)
  - [Residency interviews](#)
  - [Preparing for residency interviews the second time around](#)
- Letter of Intent Resources
  - [ASHP Professional Pearl](#)
  - [UC San Francisco](#)
  - [University of New Mexico](#)
- Interview Resources
  - [ASHP Career Planning Website](#) including tips on interviews and thank you letters
  - AJHP Publications
    - Hambrook A, Johnson D, Medina MS. [Tips for succeeding at pharmacy residency phone interviews.](#) *Am J Health Syst Pharm.* 2015;72(22):1940-2.

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