

**SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE**  
***SIGNALING 101 FOR THE MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE FELLOWSHIP APPLICANT***

**What is a signal?**

A signal is a way for you to show interest in a specific Maternal-Fetal Medicine (MFM) fellowship program at the time of application in the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) system.

**How many signals do I get?**

MFM applicants will get 10 signals in the 2025 ERAS application season.

**What is the benefit to a signal versus geographic preference?**

A signal allows you to be more specific than a geographic region preference. For example, you may want to be at a specific program in New York City, but not at any program in New York State. Or you want to be at a program in North Carolina, but not a program in South Carolina or Tennessee. Program signals provide the opportunity to express sincere interest to individual programs.

**Have signals been used in other specialties?**

Signals have been used in other specialties – including OBGYN. The implementation of signaling has decreased the number of applications required to match and decreased costs to applicants. Signaling provides an equitable way for applicants to demonstrate interest in programs. Though signals increase an applicant's chance of getting an interview, it does not guarantee it.

**Will a signal impact place on the rank list?**

No. Signals are only used in the application phase of the process to signify interest. They should not be used to help programs compose their rank list.

**Will I get an interview at a program if I don't signal them?**

Experience from other specialties show that the likelihood of obtaining an interview without an application signal is significantly less than when a signal is provided to a program. Signals are meant to help applicants, as they help program directors to know who is more interested in their program. Different program directors may use signals in different ways and most programs are likely to give preference to applicants who signal them.

**Is there any strategy to how I use my signals?**

There are no evidence-based strategies to how you should use your signals. There are some recommendations based on the OBGYN residency application. Applicants should use all their allotted signals (10) and consider programs where you have a strong interest and a reasonable chance of matching. Some experts recommend using all of your signals at your top choices while others recommend a rule of thirds with a third at

“reach” programs, third at “target” programs for which you are well qualified and a third for other programs. Applicants are encouraged to work with their local mentors to determine where to send their signals.

### **Should applicants signal their home program?**

In general, yes! The recommendation is that if an applicant is interested in their home program, they should signal them. This helps to level the playing field regarding interviews / interest for applicants coming from places without an MFM Fellowship program. Discuss with your program director at your home program, if applicable, to determine their preference for use of signals for candidates from their home program.

### **How do signals increase equity?**

Signals help ensure that applicants, regardless of their background or connections, have an equal opportunity to demonstrate interest in a program. Previously, if you were interested in a program, your program director or MFM attending might email that program’s fellowship director to let them know your interest. However, not everyone may have an attending who knows someone at a different program and that is able to call and advocate for them. A signal takes it out of the hands of ‘who knows who’ and makes communication directly between the applicant and the director. Signals also have the potential to decrease the number of applications that a program director will review. This enables a program director to focus more on the quality of the application and the applicant, leading to a more holistic and equitable process.