

**SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE**  
***SIGNALING 101 FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE FELLOWSHIP DIRECTORS***

**What is a signal?**

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

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

A signal allows an applicant to be more specific than a geographic region preference. For example, the applicant may be interested in a specific program in New York City, but not at any program in New York State. Or the applicant may want to be at a program in North Carolina, but not a program in South Carolina or Tennessee.

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

In other specialties and in OBGYN residencies, the implementation of signaling has decreased the number of applications that an applicant is submitting and decreased the cost for applicants. Program directors find signals helpful to know which applicants are really interested in their programs, versus just widely applying.

**Why would an applicant send me a signal?**

A signal from an applicant says, 'I am VERY interested in your program' or 'Even though I live across the country now, I would actually move to your city/state'. Ideally, signals replace emails from applicants telling you they are excited about your program as well as emails from applicant's faculty trying to 'sell you' on their applicants.

**How might a signal impact my application review process?**

There are no evidence-based guidelines for how to use signals in your application process. Some programs may receive many signals and opt to only review or interview applicants who signal them. Other programs may opt to review all applications but use signals as part of your holistic review or scoring system. Finally, some program directors may opt to use signals as a 'tie breaker' between applicants to invite for an interview.

**Should a signal impact placement of candidate on the rank list?**

No. Signals are only used in the application phase of the process. They should not impact your rank list in any way.

**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; using the signal in this manner maintains equity such that applicants coming from programs without fellowships are afforded the opportunity to get a similar number of interviews as applicants coming from programs with MFM fellowships. Be sure to communicate your signaling preference for any applicants from your home institution your preference for use of signals to their home program.

**How do signals increase equity?**

Signals can improve equity by enabling applicants to directly signal their strong interest in programs and taking away the need for calls/emails from colleagues to demonstrate applicant's interest. For applicants coming from places without a fellowship or who are not connected in the field of MFM, this helps to level the playing field regarding interviews and demonstrating interest. A signal takes it out of the hands of 'who knows who' and makes communication directly between the applicant and the director.