

Shadowing 101:

Professional Exploration of Healthcare Careers

What is Job Shadowing?

Job shadowing is an opportunity to observe or follow a professional for an allotted amount of time as they conduct the daily tasks of their profession. Shadowing sessions last 1 hour or longer depending on the time the provider has to offer. Typically, shadowing involves observing patient/client and provider interactions, but you could also conduct an informational interview virtually, over email, or in person to learn more about the profession you're interested in.

Before You Decide to Shadow, Ask Yourself...

- What are my educational goals?
- What do I hope to learn?
- What types of professionals do I need to shadow, and where do they work?

How Do You Find Shadowing Opportunities?

- Shadowing programs are often listed on a clinic or hospital's website.
- Network with other students, family, or friends.
- Talk with your Pre-Professional Health Advisor.
- Inquiry by email or phone

Students are expected to set up and complete shadowing experiences on their own.

Some Professional Tips:

- Use professional and polite language when inquiring about an opportunity.
- Use a professional email address that includes your name: ccowgirl@gmail.com
- If the answer is "No", thank them for letting you know and move on to the next opportunity. It's not personal.

Why Job Shadow?

- Get first-hand knowledge about an area of healthcare.
- Learn if a profession is right for you.
- Open your eyes to new possibilities in the field.
- Create a network and build relationships with professionals.
- See how your coursework connects to healthcare careers.
- Some professional schools require shadowing, and all expect it!
- Build professional competencies valued in healthcare roles such as:
 - Commitment to life-long learning
 - Communication
 - Cultural awareness and humility
 - Ethical responsibility
 - Collaboration with others

How To Inquire About Shadowing Opportunities.

Not all clinics, hospitals, and practices have educational programs but may be willing to allow you to visit with them for a time. The only way to know is to ask in a professional manner by phone or email.

Example Email:

Dear Dr. Jones,

I found your contact information _____. I am a sophomore at the University of Wyoming majoring in Physiology. I have a strong interest in pursuing _____, and I'm interested in the work you do. I am wondering if you are open to the possibility of allowing me to shadow you or someone else in your office for an hour or two during _____. If this is something you are willing to consider, please feel free to suggest a day and time that works best for you.

Thank you for reading this email and considering my request. If you would like to reach out to me by phone instead of email, my number is _____. I will follow up with a telephone call if I have not heard back. I know you are very busy and appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cora Cowgirl

It is recommended that you meet with a Pre-Health Professions advisor prior to your shadowing experience. There are two Pre-Health Professions advisors in the UW College of Health Science: Craig Vaske and Krista Howe.

Schedule an Appointment: <https://www.uwyo.edu/preprof>

Email: hsadvise@uwyo.edu

Phone: 307-766-3787

The Shadowing Role

The role you play in shadowing is strictly that of an observer. You will not (and should not) be allowed or asked to participate in any clinical care or other hands-on tasks.

More likely than not, you will be required to undergo a **background check** and/or **provide immunization records** prior to shadowing in a healthcare setting. This is a reality of healthcare, and you will encounter it repeatedly in this profession. Patients and clients come first, and healthcare providers have an ethical responsibility to protect them.

Preparing for Your Shadowing Experience

- Have general knowledge about the clinic or hospital and who they serve.
- Be ready to answer questions about yourself as you professionally converse with staff and other employees.
- Confirm the date and time of your meeting.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early in case of housekeeping items to do before shadowing. Do NOT be late.
- Be prepared to sign a **non-disclosure agreement** or other legally binding documents.
- Dress appropriately. If you aren't sure what to wear, ask the clinic or hospital.
- Don't wear too much cologne/perfume or strong-smelling lotions.
- Bring a small notebook and pen in case you

How HIPAA applies to you during shadowing:

If allowed to take notes, do not record identifying information about patients.

Do not discuss patients anywhere in the facility where you are shadowing.

Do not discuss patients you encounter on any form of social media, in any way, during or after shadowing.

Do not take videos of yourself or anyone else in the clinic or hospital.

When describing your experience to others or in interviews and personal statements, never use identifiable information.

A Note on Professionalism:

UW students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner throughout their shadowing experience and abide by all rules and policies of the practice, hospital, or clinic they are entering. Poor behavior will not only reflect badly on the student and result in being dismissed from the shadowing establishment, but it can also reflect poorly on the university, particularly the College of Health Sciences.

Shadowing Etiquette

- Turn off your cell phone and either leave it in your car or in a coat pocket hanging up.
- Ask permission to take notes about what you observe.
- Always ask permission before you touch anything.
- Abide by all rules and policies of the clinic, hospital, or practice that pertain to you.
- Use appropriate professional titles for those you interact with. If you aren't sure what to call them, find out before-hand or simply ask.
- Show interest in what is going on. Give the experience your full attention.
- Only ask questions or speak when appropriate.
- Be mindful of your host's and patient/clinic priorities and space. If you need to get out of the way, do so quickly.
- **Remember:** you represent UW, the College of Health Sciences, and your professional reputation.
- Always stay with your host or appropriate parties. Do not go into spaces you aren't invited into.
- Collect business cards from those you meet at the end of the experience.
- Use good judgement and you will have an amazing experience!

After the Experience

- Send a "Thank You" card within one week of your experience thanking them for the opportunity and privilege to shadow with them and for everything you learned.
- Document the time you spent shadowing, record names and contacts, and how many hours you spent there.
- Reflect: thoughtfully record your experience and what you learned. What did you like? What didn't you like? What surprised you? How did it make you feel?

**Adapted from presentations, forms, and handouts created by Indeed, UCLA, Northwestern College, St. Louis University, University of Alabama, and Brigham Young University.