



Southwest Area Health Education Center

Frequently Asked Questions

? What is SWAHEC?

A: SWAHEC is located at Cameron University and works with 23 different counties. SWAHEC seeks to improve the health of our population, especially the rural and underserved, by creating partnerships among community and academic organizations. We link health care resources to build and strengthen community-based education.

? What Programs does SWAHEC have to offer me or my organization?

A: SWAHEC is available to offer services to students, teachers, schools, parents, and others. The following services are available to you: opportunities for career exploration, job shadowing or observation programs, health career camps, information and referrals, career fair exhibits, learning resource materials, field trips to area health care facilities, classroom presentations, and guest speakers on health-related issues.

? What are some of SWAHEC's more popular programs?

A: The Observation or Job Shadowing Program seems to be very popular with high schools. Students choose what health care discipline they are interested in and SWAHEC finds a local professional in that particular discipline who serves as a preceptor for the students. While working with the Preceptor, the students experience first-hand what it is like to work in a particular health field.

? What is the difference between Job Shadowing and the Observation Program?

A: A Job shadow is defined as *less than* 20 hours of activity with a preceptor. The observation program is defined as *a minimum* of 20 hours with a Preceptor. The most popular form of job shadowing is the all-day shadowing.

? Which is better for me? The Job Shadowing or the Observation Program ?

A: It really depends on how much time you have to commit. Other factors that play a role are how close you live to the Preceptor site, if you have transportation available to you, as well as your class schedule.

? What are the benefits of participating in Job Shadowing or the Observation Program?

A: When you participate in a job shadow or the observation program, you gain first-hand knowledge of what it is like to work in a particular health field. If you are thinking about pursuing a career in a health field, an opportunity like this allows you to determine whether or not you think you are well suited to that career before you enter training on an academic level. You may just as likely decide that you are not suited for a particular health field as decide that you are. Both are equally important. Also, upon completion, you are given a certificate from SWAHEC/ Cameron University; which has proven to be invaluable for resumes and scholarship applications.

? When can I complete the Job Shadowing or Observation Program?

A: Some schools have career classes where the students get credit for the program. These schools allow the students to leave during school hours for the duration of the program. Some paper work is required for this. While other schools do not give credit for the program, they will allow some students to leave during school time to complete the activity. The student also has the option of completing the program after school and/or on weekends. Whenever you decide to complete your time, you will be monitored and are required to sign in and out of your scheduled session and have your preceptor initial for verification.

? Is there any health career in which it is difficult to find a Preceptor ?

A: SWAHEC has not had a request that it has not been able to find a Preceptor who is willing to work with a student. There is a web of resources available throughout SW Oklahoma that people are not even aware of. While the most popular requests include Nurses, Physicians, and Veterinarians; others include Radiology, Sports Medicine/Rehabilitation, Ophthalmology, and Social work. "Health Careers" is a broad term that includes a wide range of careers.

? What if I live in a small town where there are not a lot of resources available to me?

A: While SWAHEC works out of Lawton and has many partnerships within the city, its focus is on the underserved and rural areas. Chances

are that no matter how small your town is, there is a health care facility within distance to you. Students from towns as small as 400 have reaped the benefits of this program.

? **What have I got to lose?**

A: Nothing!

? **What have I got to gain?**

A: Experience, knowledge, self confidence, a strong base on which to make informed decisions, and a positive and rewarding future!

? **What do I have to do in order to participate in a Job Shadow or Observation Program sponsored by SWAHEC?**

A: Talk to your career counselor or teacher about your interest or call SWAHEC directly yourself. We are happy to help you with any questions or concerns you may have. All SWAHEC needs is for you to express an interest and we go from there. We do all the paper work, such as student and preceptor agreements, confidentiality and liability forms, create a schedule for you based upon your availability, and monitor your progress regularly.

