

Communication & Interpersonal Skills

The program coordinator's desk is the communication portal for the program. Whether communicating with medical students, resident applicants, newly matched applicants, fellows, faculty, or graduates, the coordinator's attitude and demeanor sets the tone for the whole program. Many times the coordinator needs to spend time listening to a resident or applicant. Key ingredients in effective communication are fairly simple:

- Listening
- Watching
- Expressing
- Not speaking
- Informing
- And, Listening

The coordinator can be the observer of nonverbal communication when applicants are in the program for interview, as well as the representative of the whole program. The coordinator is the disseminator of information throughout the year, and should be considered the authority for such information as the rotation schedule, which person is on call, what is the topic of today's conference, et cetera. Confidential information constantly passes through the program coordinator's hands, and what is done with it can be of crucial importance. Knowing when to share and when to withhold information takes judgment and a sense of what can happen if that information is passed to another person. Confidences must be kept exactly that – confidential. A little rhyme might help remind the coordinator to think before speaking:

To keep your lips from little slips five things observe with care:
To whom you speak, of whom you speak, and why, and when, and where.

-- Lois Shuman