

Translating Osteopathic Understanding into Community Health (TOUCH) is a national initiative of the Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents (COSGP). This program encourages osteopathic medical students to engage in service throughout their community in order to impact those outside of osteopathic medical students and professionals. The purpose of the program is to expand osteopathic ideals and principles to those unaware of our profession's values.

In accordance with the osteopathic philosophy of treating the whole patient, service goes beyond mere health promotion and can include a wide array of involvement that has a strong positive impact on peoples' lives.

Please refer any questions about the TOUCH program to the COSGP National Programs Representative at COGPPProgRep@acom.org

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I. TOUCH HOURS

- A.** TOUCH Hours are any activity that works to improve the health and wellness of a community that incorporates osteopathic tenets, awareness, principles, and practice. (See Section VII, *TOUCH Hours Standards*)
 - 1.** A "community" includes working to improve the overall health of humans, animals, and the environment.
- B.** Volunteer Hours are any activity that provides service to a community but does not meet TOUCH Hours standards. (See Section VII, *TOUCH Hours Standards*)
- C.** Service Hours are defined as any event that involves active participation or directly benefits the betterment of the community either local or global.
 - 1.** TOUCH Hours and Volunteer Hours are both designated as Service Hours.
 - 2.** Activities can be associated with either COM student organizations or external organizations.
- D.** The "community" shall be designated as those outside of each institution. Community includes local, state, national, and international activities.

II. ROLES

- A.** AACOM will maintain and coordinate the administration of the TOUCH program, as well as maintain and support an online database
- B.** COSGP will maintain ownership and administration of the TOUCH program.
 - 1.** A National Coordinator appointed by the COSGP executive board for a term of one (1) year will:
 - i.** Oversee the national program
 - ii.** Delineate policy and protocol
 - iii.** Resolve disputes (see Section III)
 - iv.** Serve as Chairperson of COSGP Student Services Committee
 - 2.** A COSGP Student Services Committee appointed by the National Coordinator and comprised of general COSGP council members for a term of one (1) year, will:
 - i.** Review and clarify policy and protocol
- C.** Each College Student Government Association (SGA) will appoint:
 - 1.** A student COM Coordinator to serve as the primary TOUCH program contact at each college for a term of one (1) year. The Coordinator will verify and approve completed hours and certify each student's completion of the program

III. RECORDS

- A.** Records will be maintained by a system chosen and maintained by AACOM.
- B.** Student records consist of:
 - 1.** Student name
 - 2.** Student college
 - 3.** Event name
 - 4.** Event date
 - 5.** Event city and state
 - 6.** Event coordinator, including contact information (email address or phone number)
 - i.** If the submitting student served as the event coordinator, they must list another person of authority that was affiliated with the event to verify their hours. This may be another executive board member, previous board member, faculty member, or community contact.
 - 7.** Hours
 - i.** TOUCH Hours include 100% of qualified (see TOUCH Hours I.A.) event hours plus 50% of preparation hours for a qualified event

- a. Event hours
 - i. Hours spent participating at actual event
 - b. Preparation hours
 - i. Hours spent in administrative tasks related to planning or training for the event for which hours are claimed.
 - ii. Students are responsible for delineating how many hours per submission are preparation hours, including the calculation of such.
 - iii. 50% counted towards TOUCH Hours
 - c. Volunteer Hours
 - i. Hours not eligible for TOUCH Hours as defined in TOUCH Hours Standards, A.
 - ii. Planning or training time for non-TOUCH events is counted as 50% of actual hours spent planning the volunteer event for which hours are claimed in 1.
 - iii. Denied TOUCH Hours are included in Volunteer Hours.
- 8. Event Description**
- i. The description should demonstrate how the service meets TOUCH Standards.
 - ii. Descriptions should include the student's role in the event.
- C.** Student TOUCH Hours should be submitted to the online database within one (1) month of the activity or date of service.
- 1. COM TOUCH Coordinators may make case-by-case exceptions to this rule as needed.
 - 2. Any record or event greater than 50 TOUCH Hours requires additional verification by National TOUCH Coordinator
- D.** Any participant, faculty member, or program administrator will be entitled to review all records pertaining to the TOUCH program.
- E.** TOUCH records and TOUCH database may be used for research with the appropriate requests, supporting documentation, and institutional review board approval.

IV. CYCLE

- A.** The TOUCH year will extend from May 1 to April 30 of the next year.
 - 1. This cycle may be adjusted as needed by National Program Coordinator and AACOM staff with advance notice.
- B.** The required hours must be completed within the TOUCH year.
- C.** Hours completed must be completed following matriculation into medical school.
 - 1. Hours completed by first-year medical students during the summer before matriculation are not eligible.
- D.** Completed hours may not be carried over from one academic year to the next.

V. DISPUTE

- A.** Students may dispute whether or not their activities should be counted as TOUCH hours. The contesting student has the right to dispute approved or denied hours.
The first level of dispute resolution is with the COM Coordinator and the Student Service Coordinator, who will serve as impartial decision-makers as needed.
 - 1.** Final decision will be made by the National TOUCH Coordinator.
- B.** All records submitted are subject to formal review by COSGP Student Services Committee.
- C.** Failure to supply records will result in zero credit for the TOUCH Hours gained in dispute.

VI. FALSIFYING RECORDS

- A.** Students who are found to have falsified a TOUCH record, in a first offense will receive a warning from the national TOUCH coordinator. Students who are found to have falsified a TOUCH record, in a second or subsequent offense, will receive no credit for previous hours; be deemed ineligible for TOUCH recognition for the remainder of the TOUCH year; and the student's falsification will be reported to the student's college by the national TOUCH coordinator.

VII. TOUCH HOURS STANDARDS

- A.** TOUCH Hours are awarded for any activity that works to improve the health and wellness of a community.
 - 1.** The event must provide a service to the community in order to be TOUCH eligible.
- B.** Denied TOUCH Hours count toward Volunteer Hours.
- C.** Specific events that count as TOUCH hours include, but are not limited to
 - 1.** Item donation drive participation (NOT fundraising drives) for a MAX total of 10 TOUCH hours for any given cycle.
 - i.** No more than 2 hours may be claimed per donation drive per student, regardless of contribution amount.
 - ii.** The minimum donation requirements to earn one hour will be set by the COM TOUCH Coordinator but must be set at no more than \$10 (as it is worth in 2022) in donation value or the inflated equivalent.
 - 2.** TOUCH-eligible activities performed while at a conference (but not hours spent at the conference itself- see Section VII.F.2)
 - 3.** TOUCH-eligible activities performed with a religious organization so long as the service is not preaching or proselytizing alone, and would be the same if organized by a non-religious organization

- i. Example: volunteering at a soup kitchen run by a Synagogue
 - a. The service would be the same regardless of the organizing body and goes beyond preaching/proselytizing
 - b. An example that would NOT count: volunteering to lead a youth bible study
 - i. This service is preaching/proselytizing alone
 - ii. Volunteering physical labor at a fundraising event
 - a. Example: registering participants, outlining the course, handing out water, providing medical care, etc. for a fundraising run
 - b. The fundraising and participation itself would not count according to Section VII.E.5.
 - iii. The following events do not count as TOUCH hours but do count as Volunteer hours if the student was not otherwise compensated for the activity
 - Tutoring of classmates/peers
 - a. Example: mock practical/tutoring sessions for students in lower classes
 - b. Staying after shift to continue care outside of academic requirements
 - c. SIM labs, small group leadership
 - d. Political advocacy work that is done within the medical community
- D.** Ineligible activities: The following activities are not eligible for TOUCH hours or for Volunteer hours:
- 1. Any service activity for which you are being graded or is included in your grade
 - 2. Physician shadowing or clinical rotations
 - 3. Conference attendance including but not limited to: AOA House of Delegates, AMA House of Delegates, SOMA House of Delegates, OMED, Educating Leaders, SOMA National Convention, National Osteopathic Student Caucus (NOSC), COSGP Business Meetings, specialty conferences, research symposiums, AMA-MSS, state society conferences, CME conferences, etc.
 - 4. Administrative tasks that do not involve planning hours and that do not take place at the event.
 - 5. Travel time, sleep, or other time spent not in service for overnight service events
 - 6. Funds raised for philanthropic causes including:
 - i. Pledging or collecting pledges (ex. Charity Miles)
 - ii. Participation in athletic events (ex. Fun Runs)
 - 7. COSGP Silent Auction activities, including acquiring auction items or staffing the auction.
 - 8. Funds raised directly to benefit school-associated clubs or organizations
 - 9. Leadership responsibilities in a College Student Organization

10. SIM labs, staying after rotation/clerkships, small group leadership, normal student organization activities (ex. meetings, bringing in speakers, etc.)

11. Research activities

E. Awards

1. Final hours are tallied by AACOM staff and the National TOUCH Coordinator.

2. Electronic certificates will be presented by AACOM Staff and National TOUCH Coordinator to the COM Coordinator for completion and distribution.

3. Awards:

i. Participation recognition

a. Students who complete less than 50 approved TOUCH Hours

ii. Silver-level recognition

a. Students who complete 50 but less than 100 approved TOUCH Hours

iii. Gold-level recognition

a. Students who complete 100 or more approved TOUCH Hours

iv. Platinum-level recognition

a. Awarded to the student at each COM with the highest number of approved TOUCH Hours

4. Recognition may include but is not limited to: certificates, plaques, trophies, or other materials as deemed appropriate by the COSGP Student Services Committee.

5. Letter of Commendation

i. A Letter of Commendation template will be sent to each COM Coordinator to be filled and completed in the name of each rising OMS-IV student that has earned a TOUCH award during their tenure at the COM

ii. Said Letters of Commendation will be presented to the COM Dean suggesting the student's commitment to service be included in their Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE)

iii. Letters of Commendation are sent annually and are based on each rising OMS-IV's TOUCH Hours accumulated during each cycle year from their tenure in the program.