

2026 Adult Reconstruction Match White Paper

In order to help orthopaedic residents obtain a fellowship in adult reconstruction in an orderly way, and for fellowship programs to obtain fellows in these specialties, the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS), The Hip Society (THS) and The Knee Society (TKS) have established this Fellowship Match Program. The Match is vital to the future of our specialties, and the leadership of these organizations, as well as the leadership of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), are fully committed to doing whatever is necessary to make the Match Program a success.

The Adult Reconstruction Match Program was developed by a Task Force established by these organizations, assisted by other orthopaedic societies which had already established matches, that provided advice and sample documents. The Match is governed by the AAHKS Fellowship Committee.

The Match will use the services of the San Francisco Match (SF Match) to provide the Match website and matching services, www.SFMatch.org. Adult Reconstruction Fellowships will be listed separately on the SF Match website for the convenience of residents.

General Rules for Fellowship Programs and Fellowship Program Directors:

- ✓ Applicants should **NEVER** be asked how they will rank a fellowship program. Programs may not request an applicant's commitment prior to the Match.
- ✓ Programs must **avoid all contact** with applicants **between the interview and the Match date**, especially in ways that may be seen as bargaining with, recruiting, or pressuring the applicant. Follow-up visits after the interview should not be requested by the program.
- ✓ If the applicant reaches out after the interview to thank the program, the program may respond as a courtesy; however, they **CANNOT under any circumstances** respond in a way that may be seen as bargaining with, recruiting, or pressuring the applicant. If requested, the program can provide additional information about the fellowship program.
- ✓ Rank lists **must** remain confidential to protect the integrity of the Match.
- ✓ The match is a binding commitment between the applicant and the program, dependent upon satisfactory completion of prerequisite training and any explicitly stated special requirements of the program.
- ✓ **Post-match vacancies** will be filled by **direct negotiation**. However, programs cannot fill vacancies with unauthorized agreements made prior to the Match and will not attempt to fill vacancies with an applicant already matched elsewhere unless the applicant has gotten a formal written release from the matched program.
- ✓ Match violations are reported to the Match Administrator. The Match rules will be enforced and all violations investigated. Determination of penalty is at the discretion of AAHKS Fellowship Committee. See the **2026 Match Code of Conduct** for more details.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Match

- 1) **Suppose I match, but later I decide to seek a position offered in another Match. Can I drop this Match and continue with the other Match?**

Answer: No, certification of your rank list indicates that you agree to withdraw from all competing matches.

- 2) **Can I obtain a position without an interview?**

Answer: Generally, no—unless the program director waived the interview requirement.

- 3) **A program director seems to solicit a commitment before the Match. What should I tell them?**

Answer: You may say anything you are comfortable with. When you complete your confidential rank list, you must remember that any statements you made do not constitute binding commitments. You are free to change your preference at any time and, by the same rule, program directors are also free to change their preference after interviewing more applicants.

- 4) **If I rank a program as #10 and another applicant ranks it as #1, who will get that program?**

Answer: When two applicants compete for the same program, the program's rank list decides.

- 5) **One program director tells me that they like me very much. Some better programs are noncommittal. Which program should I rank first?**

Answer: List the more desirable program first. Your request will first go to the program you ranked highest. Skipping (or downgrading) the better program eliminates your chance of being considered there, while it does not improve the chance that others will accept you. There is no risk in ranking programs high that you like, but for which you may have little chance.

- 6) **A program director told me that they would "rank me high." Does that mean a guaranteed position?**

Answer: Definitely not. If you are ranked #6 out of 80 applicants, you are certainly "ranked high," but if that program only has four fellowship positions available you are still out of luck. It is always wise to list additional programs as a safeguard, as long as you would rather go there than remain unmatched.

- 7) **Can I withdraw from the position I accepted through the Match?**

Answer: No. Your signature on your rank list makes the Match a binding commitment. Withdrawal is possible only in exceptional circumstances and requires written approval from your program director and the AAHKS Fellowship Committee. Refer to the Match Code of Conduct for more details.

- 8) **Can I end up being matched to a program I do not really like?**

Answer: No, unless you put that program on your rank list. If you do not like a program, do not rank that program. Your placement request will only go to programs on your rank list. The SF Match system processes your rank list like a stockbroker processing written orders from a client. In doing so, the stockbroker obviously cannot guarantee that the client will be satisfied with the stock's performance over the next several years. Similarly, the Match cannot guarantee that you or the program director will remain satisfied with each other's performances. In the years between your interview and the start of your fellowship, there may be changes in your matched program's faculty, funding, or even accreditation. SF Match promises diligence in processing rank lists, but neither it nor its sponsoring organizations can accept any responsibility whatsoever for changes made to fellowship programs or any consequences those changes may bring.