

How to be a Good Senior Resident



ACP®

Michigan
Chapter

Leadership and dynamics

- Lead by example: Model the behaviors you expect from your interns.
- Know your list well, especially the big picture plan.
- Set early team expectations and mid-rotation checkpoints.
- Encourage interns, celebrate wins, and address concerns directly and kindly.

Triage and efficiency

Managing a Larger List of Patients:

- Focus on trends, disposition, and acuity—not all granular details.
- Assess: Better, worse, or same? Who is at risk?
- Evolve: Design your EMR list to work for you (e.g., admission date, vitals, PT/OT needs).

Working with the ED:

- Communicate: “What are you worried about?” and “How sick is this patient?”
- Recognize goals: Theirs is stabilization for safe admission. Your role is long-term management and safety.

Teaching and mentoring

- Focus on bedside case-based teaching, not long didactics for residents.
- Medical students learn best for exams, consider solving questions with them.
- Play to strengths while helping them strengthen weaknesses.
- Use low-stress times to let them manage more complex tasks.
- Ask about their goals, both clinical and personal, early in the rotation.

Struggling learners

Giving Feedback:

- Use objective examples impacting patient care rather than personality traits.
- Align feedback with their success: “I want you to be seen for the hard work you’re doing, and would not want you to be perceived as not doing your job”
- Don’t give criticism—give actionable feedback.
- Use informal moments (e.g., coffee runs) for brief feedback discussions.

Tough Conversations:

- Choose the right time and setting.
- Invite reflection: “How do you think things are going?”
- Gather context if needed, and ask for help when situations are complex.

Wellness and reflection

- Check in with yourself and others regularly.
- Reflect daily: “What is one good thing I did today?”
- Build a support network (peers, chief residents, attendings, family, friends).
- You don’t need to be perfect—being human is part of being a great doctor.

Resources and reminders

- Check out your institutional resources
- ACP IMPower Toolkit: acponline.org/impower
- Curbsiders PGY-2 Podcast: Curbsiders Ep #152

- Lead with Empathy & Humanity. Give yourself and others grace.
- Trust your interns—verify their work, but let them grow.
- Set the tone, your attitude shapes the team dynamic.
- Share your own challenges to create a safe learning environment.