

## **Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match Rules and Regulations**

### **The TSDA Match**

The Thoracic Surgery Directors Association (TSDA) Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match program has been devised to allow applicants and program directors to consider every option for training in congenital cardiac surgery without undue pressure being placed on either party. This program establishes uniform dates for applications, interviews, and the ultimate match itself. After applicants interview programs (and programs interview applicants), each will prepare a final and confidential listing of their choice of programs (and applicants) in order of preference. The match will be conducted by [SF Match](#). All participants must abide by the TSDA Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match Rules and Regulations as well as any additional rules stated by SF Match. All Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited congenital cardiac surgery fellowship programs are required to participate in the TSDA congenital cardiac surgery fellowship match and register with SF Match. Only ACGME-accredited positions will be offered in the match. All ACGME-accredited congenital cardiac surgery fellowship positions will be 24 consecutive months in duration.

Applicants and program directors may express their interest in each other; however, they shall not solicit verbal or written statements implying a commitment. Applicants shall, at all times, be free to keep confidential the names or identities of programs to which they have or may apply. Applicants may withdraw from the match process by updating their account on SF Match. However, applicants must email program directors at programs to which they applied to inform them that they have withdrawn from the match. Programs with at least one open position listed on SF Match at the time the Match opens may submit a request to withdraw from the Match due to extraordinary or unforeseen circumstances (including but not limited to a program deficiency or the lack of adequate case volume to support a congenital cardiac fellow). All program withdrawal

requests must be submitted by the deadline date established by TSDA for consideration by the Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Committee Chair and the President of TSDA. Programs are precluded from opting out of the Match process after the process opens unless permission to withdraw from the Match has been granted. Should a program's withdrawal request be approved by the Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Committee Chair and the President of TSDA, the program director is responsible for submitting a written withdrawal request to SF Match signed by the program director, updating the program's SF Match account by the established deadline. Withdrawals are valid for the current cycle only and must be accompanied with an explanation letter. Furthermore, the program will reimburse any candidates who interviewed at the program during the interview period for reasonable expenses incurred (lodging, coach class round-trip air or train fare, and ground transportation [taxi fare, shuttle fare, current mileage rate as established by the Internal Revenue Service]). Applicants are strongly encouraged to retain all travel receipts for expenses incurred during the Match interview process.

Programs that withdraw from the match, or do not offer an ACGME-accredited position(s) in any given match year, may not select, appoint, or hire a trainee for an ACGME-accredited congenital cardiac fellowship position(s) outside of the match.

Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship program directors cannot require matched fellows to continue training or remain at the program beyond the fellow's ACGME-approved training cycle. Program directors cannot withhold a release letter for a fellow wishing to leave the program after they have completed their ACGME-accredited training cycle and have met all their case log index requirements and are in good standing.

An example of a Match violation includes an applicant being pressured by a program director to reveal the program's place on the applicant's rank order list or to identify the names of other programs with which the applicants have interviewed.

After Match Day, programs and applicants who did not match may contact one another about open positions. A program cannot offer a position to an applicant who is matched to a position in another program.

The failure of an applicant to accept a matched position or the failure of a program to accept a matched applicant will be considered a breach of the Applicant or Institution Agreement, as applicable. If an applicant who is a party to an Applicant Agreement breaches that Agreement, the applicant may be barred from training at an ACGME-accredited congenital cardiac surgery program for up to two (2) years. If a program that is a party to an Institution Agreement breaches that Agreement, the program violators may not be permitted to accept a congenital cardiac surgery fellow for up to two (2) years and/or identified as a Match violator for one to three years or permanently. All decisions as to whether a breach has occurred and, in cases where there is a finding of breach, the duration of the penalty will be made by the Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Committee Chair and the President of TSDA, and a letter reporting the breach will be sent from the Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Committee Chair to the Chief Executive Officer of the ACGME and the respective Residency Review Committee, the appropriate program director association, and other appropriate individuals and organizations.

The penalty for breach of an Applicant Agreement or an Institution Agreement may be waived if strict enforcement of the Agreement would be inappropriate. This would be a highly unusual or unexpected situation that would create serious and extreme hardship. “Serious and extreme hardship” refers to the occurrence of a highly unusual, unexpected, and unpredictable situation or circumstance that renders the fulfillment of a TSDA Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match obligation impossible or would result in irreparable harm to any one of the committed Match participants. Examples of “serious and extreme hardship” include but are not limited to an applicant who failed to graduate on time; the closing of a program or institution; the death or serious illness of a family member that requires the applicant to alter the choice of fellowship location; or the loss of accreditation by a program or institution.

Evidence of such an occurrence must be documented in a letter submitted to TSDA, and all such occurrences will be reviewed by the TSDA Professionalism and Ethics Committee and adjudicated by the Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Committee Chair and the President of TSDA. Should an applicant or institution disagree with the decision regarding a breach of the Applicant or Institution Agreement, or duration of a

penalty regarding a breach of that Agreement, such disagreement can be appealed to the TSDA Executive Committee.

### **Statement of Professionalism**

As part of the match process, each applicant is required to submit a signed Applicant Agreement between themselves and TSDA. A signed Applicant Agreement is to be submitted with a completed application to program directors at programs to which the applicant is applying. Likewise, each participating program is required to submit a signed agreement between itself and TSDA. A signed Institution Agreement is to be submitted directly to TSDA. Institutions participating in the TSDA Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match must be accredited by the ACGME and accept only congenital cardiac surgery fellows who meet eligibility requirements as outlined by the ACGME Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Congenital Cardiac Surgery.

Individuals applying for the TSDA Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match must meet the eligibility requirements as outlined by the ACGME Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Congenital Cardiac Surgery. Match participants are expected to conduct their dealings in an ethical, professional, and confidential manner. The failure of a match participant to conduct their dealings in an ethical, professional, and confidential manner will be considered a breach of the Applicant or Institution agreement, as applicable.

### **TSDA Match Process**

Programs and candidates are required to register with SF Match and pay associated registration fees. Each Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship candidate must submit a completed application, and a signed and dated agreement, to program directors at programs to which they are applying apply by the application deadline established by TSDA. Program directors and/or program coordinators will contact candidates they wish to interview and make the necessary arrangements. It is at the program director's discretion to select which applicant(s) are invited for an interview, whether virtual or in-person. Following the interview cycle, applicants and program directors are required to

submit SF Match their respective rank order lists by the deadline date established by TSDA.

It is recommended that applicants include on their rank order lists only those programs that represent their true preferences. Programs should be ranked in sequence in order of the applicant's preferences. Applicants may rank as many or as few programs as they wish, realizing that if an applicant matches with a program, they are obligated to participate in that fellowship. It is unlikely a program would rank an applicant who was not invited for an interview.

The process by which the algorithm match applicants with programs is posted on the SF Match website at <https://sfmatch.org/>.

Match results will be made available to programs and applicants on match day. Participants may log in to their SF Match account to view match results.

Any vacancies after the match will be posted on the SF Match website. The list is subject to change.

### **Match Violations**

If any individual involved in the TSDA match process suspects an applicant, program director, or any other person involved in the TSDA match process of violating these Match Rules and Regulations, then they may send a detailed, signed, and dated letter describing the situation to TSDA, 633 N. St. Clair Street, Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60611, or to [tsda@tsda.org](mailto:tsda@tsda.org). TSDA will acknowledge receipt of all such reports, and a review will be conducted by the TSDA Professionalism and Ethics Committee and adjudicated by the TSDA Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Committee Chair and the President of TSDA.

In accordance with the Applicant Agreement, the match between the applicant and a program creates a binding commitment to accept a position if a match results, and to start and complete training. TSDA will investigate any alleged breach of this commitment. As noted above, under certain limited circumstances, TSDA may grant to an applicant or a program a waiver of the match commitment. An applicant who terminates or resigns a position within six weeks after the start date of their matched program will be presumed to have breached the Applicant Agreement.

[Click here](#) to view ABTS Pathways to Certification for Congenital Cardiac Surgery.

[Click here](#) to view ACGME Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Congenital Cardiac Surgery.



## **Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match Institution Agreement**

Institutions participating in the TSDA Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match must be accredited by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). The match between a program and an applicant creates a mandatory commitment to accept a fellow for the position to which they match. The Thoracic Surgery Directors Association (TSDA) will investigate any alleged violation of this commitment. TSDA may grant to a program or an applicant a waiver of the match commitment in any highly unusual or unexpected situation that would create serious and extreme hardship or would result in irreparable harm to one of the parties. An applicant who terminates or resigns a position within six weeks after the start date of his or her matched program is presumed to be in violation of his or her Applicant Agreement with TSDA.

The signature below confirms that the individual named below is duly authorized to bind the institution named below, that the congenital cardiac surgery fellowship program listed below is accredited by the ACGME, and that the institution named below, acting through its congenital cardiac surgery fellowship program, agrees to comply fully with the Rules and Regulations attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, and to otherwise participate fully in the Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Match facilitated by TSDA. By participating in the match, the institution named below agrees to accept the matched applicant into its congenital cardiac surgery training program in accordance with the TSDA match process. The institution understands and agrees that failure to accept the individual who matches into its program as per the TSDA match process may result in the institution's inability to accept a congenital cardiac surgery fellow for up to two years.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Institution

AGREED AND ACCEPTED:  
THORACIC SURGERY DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Designated Institution Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
By

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Designated Institution Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date