



BUILDING BLOCKS TO A SUCCESSFUL AMA MEDICAL STUDENT SECTION AT YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL



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Introduction

The American Medical Association (AMA)-Medical Student Section (MSS) is dedicated to representing medical students, improving medical education, developing leadership, and promoting activism for the health of America. By joining the AMA-MSS, medical students become part of the AMA, the country's most influential physician organization, and have the unique ability to advocate for student, physician, and patient issues at the local and national levels. AMA medical student members have the ability to change national policy by submitting resolutions to the AMA House of Delegate. Students have significant representation in the AMA House of Delegates, the AMA Board of Trustees, and AMA Councils, and are granted full rights and privileges of AMA membership at a substantially reduced dues rate. Come be a part of the nearly 54,000 members from over 160 allopathic and osteopathic medical schools across the United States. Create and sustain a strong local section at your medical school—one that will be visible on your campus and in your community, with the organization and motivation to maximize student involvement in the AMA.

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The effective AMA Medical Student Section at your school

What makes an effective section?

The basic building block of the AMA-MSS membership is the local section. Each Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or American Osteopathic Association (AOA) accredited medical school with AMA medical student members is considered a section. Having an organized section allows you and your fellow AMA-MSS members to make the most of your AMA membership. Local sections serve as the primary unit for membership recruitment and retention, representation in the AMA-MSS policy-making process, and grassroots activities. The AMA Medical Student Section Outreach Program (MSSOP) staff maintains regular contact with the local sections' membership liaisons to facilitate recruitment and retention activities, and relies on student leaders to serve as AMA "ambassadors" on their campuses. (See "[MSSOP Guide](#)" for more details.) Generally speaking, an effective section is one that functions as a unit, where the AMA-MSS members at the medical school come together in a well-planned manner to promote AMA goals, coordinate participation in AMA activities, champion AMA membership, and be a visible presence on campus. Effective sections are likely to be active at the local level, organizing both advocacy and community service activities that are relevant to their campuses and communities, and at the national level, participating in national meetings and keeping abreast of and influencing the stance of the issues being addressed by the AMA as a whole.

In addition, medical students are encouraged to work with others in their local section to develop resolutions for consideration by the AMA-MSS Assembly at AMA-MSS Annual (June) and Interim (November) Meetings. Each section receives a minimum of one delegate to represent the section's concerns in the AMA-MSS Assembly. Schools with satellite or multiple campuses receive an additional delegate. See the "[Section Delegate Handbook](#)" for more information on section delegation.

Why should we be organized?

As an organized group, you are more likely to be able to respond effectively to the needs of your community. Local sections regularly develop and implement activities that fill a niche at their schools: gross anatomy "prep sessions" for first-years, board review sessions for second-years, residency selection and planning workshops for third-years, moving and relocating tips for fourth-years. They can secure speakers, meeting space and often food to help make these events a success. By being organized, you can also play an active role in the larger community. The credibility of the AMA, and the professionalism of an organized group, allows sections to pursue opportunities and achieve results that students, as individuals, could not accomplish on their own.

What do we need to do and where should we go for help?

First and foremost, starting or reviving a local section requires energy and commitment. If you want to get your AMA medical student section up and running, you need to be organized and ready to educate and motivate the other medical students at your school. You'll need information about organized medicine in general, opportunities for involvement in the AMA and at state and local medical associations, and the support, or at least concurrence, of your school's administration to organize a group that may be active on campus.

TIP: Get to know your administration and faculty

One of the most "formal" steps in establishing a section is becoming recognized as an official "club" by the administration at your medical school. In some cases, this may be a formality. In others, registering your section with your administration may be a critical step in obtaining financial and organizational support for your group. You may need to provide some documentation to your Dean of Student Affairs that describes your section's goals, the organizational structure, as well as information about the AMA-MSS at the national level.

In addition to securing club status from your medical school, the relationships you build with the faculty and administration at your medical school are extremely important to the health of the section. The strength or efficacy of a section can be highly dependent on the leaders, and there is often very little continuity among the students whose schedules may make it difficult to stay active longer than one or two years, and who will graduate in four years. Identifying a faculty or administration member with a strong commitment to organized medicine to advise the section will offer continuity that the students cannot manage on their own. A “Section Mentor” also can bring general organizational knowledge and institutional memory to the section, and can help new student leaders get “up to speed” with the wealth of products, services, and activities the AMA and local medical societies can offer their members (section mentors can be a current GC member in or out of your region, past active medical student who is now a member of the resident fellow section). The specific nature of the relationship will vary, but generally mentors assist leaders in identifying and obtaining useful AMA resources, planning projects, organizing activities, and learning the “ins and outs” of organized medicine. By working closely with your administration or securing a Mentor, you can increase the likelihood that your section will have consistent support through the years.

If the administration at your school is averse to the implementation of an AMA medical student section at your campus, it is important to demonstrate to him/her the benefits a section would provide on campus. From increased interest and education into the structure of the healthcare system, as well as the actual practice of medicine among students on your campus, to increased advocacy for important issues such as covering the uninsured. A section would provide the ability of students on campus to become more involved in their community. The AMA-MSS leadership would be more than happy to talk to any deans or school administrators who would like to learn more about the AMA before agreeing to approve of a section on campus.

TIP: Get to know organized medicine

The AMA, state, local, and specialty medical societies collectively are known as “organized medicine”. Each of these groups has a role to play in shaping the future of medicine, and there is a role for medical students in most of these societies.

The AMA and the AMA-Medical Student Section

The AMA Department of Medical Student Services has a wealth of expertise, information, grants, leadership opportunities, internships, and discounts on goods and services of which your sections could take advantage. The AMA-MSS Web site (www.ama-assn.org/go/mss) will provide you with information on Section Involvement Grants (SIG) to fund activities, latest AMA legislative activity, as well as ideas for great activities and the resources for carrying them out successfully. The AMA’s weekly newsletter, *AMA Wire*, and the AMA-MSS listservs, which can also be accessed through the AMA-MSS Web site, are great resources to help you and your section stay connected. We encourage all leaders to sign up online at www.ama-assn.org/go/msslistservs.

State and local medical societies

State and local medical associations also play a critical role in introducing students to the world of organized medicine. Many state medical associations are actively involved with student member recruitment, and may have a budget for projects and meetings or offer recruitment grants for local medical student sections. In addition, many state associations offer medical students a chance to hold leadership positions or serve as delegates from their sections to vote on policy. Also, keep in mind that most health policy in this country is formed and implemented at the state level. Medical student involvement in policy making means getting involved with lobbying the state legislature. In addition, your local county probably has a medical society that would be very excited to work with students on your campus. Visit your state and local medical societies’ Web sites, talk to the staff, and learn how they can help support your section.

State and regional student governance

Most states in the country have an MSS state governing board that is comprised of leaders from schools within each state. In addition, there are seven regions within the AMA-MSS and each region has a governing body of students. Each of these groups meets regularly and they may be meeting near your school. In addition each of the state and region governing bodies are charged with increasing activity and activism on campuses throughout their geographical area. By contacting your state and region leadership you will be able to seek out help and advice from seasoned MSS leaders as well as invite them to come to your campus to help start your section and speak to interested students and faculty.

TIP: Get to know your community

Your community can be defined in many ways. Within your medical school, it is important to talk to other students on your campus and find out what they see lacking in their curriculum or extracurricular activities. Are your classmates interested in performing more community service? Is there an interest to get involved in advocating for a specific issue on campus such as medical student debt, student work hours, or covering the uninsured? Are there currently enough study breaks or opportunities for students to relax post-exams? Are students interested in changing current health policy and fighting for an issue through a resolution at the national MSS meeting? Each of these questions can be addressed by specific activities that a section could plan and implement. It will be important for you to fill a void on campus and for your success; you will need to find at least a handful of other students on campus who would like to actively help in order to found a section.

In addition, it is important to learn about your wider community, the individuals and families who live and work where you go to school. What do they need? Education on public health issues? Health screenings and follow up treatment? Could schools benefit from visits from medical students who could serve as mentors and educators on a variety of health issues? Your section could plan exciting community service projects on campus, and the AMA can help make community service programs a reality by awarding [Section Involvement Grants](#) of up to \$500 to fund your community service event. Community service activities are great ways to motivate and unite your section. The more you know about your community, the more successful and meaningful your section's activity will be.

The "[AMA-MSS Community Service Project Idea Book](#)" is a good resource to help with ideas for section activities.

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Components of a local section

How should our section be organized?

You'll need to decide how you'd like the section to run, (i.e., how will decisions be made, how will ideas be generated, how can members get involved). To some extent, this will depend on the size of the medical school and number of AMA-MSS members on your campus.

A set of bylaws outlining structure, rules, roles and responsibilities serves as the foundation for the running of a fair and effective section. You will want to define membership eligibility, meeting processes and structures, and leadership positions and responsibilities. A few common leadership positions and duties are listed below, but we encourage you to add other leadership roles and modify position responsibilities as appropriate to fit your section's needs:

President. The President is responsible for coordinating activities and serving as a liaison to the national AMA-MSS leadership.

Delegate. The Delegate is your campus' voting representative on items of business at the AMA-MSS national Annual and Interim Meetings. The Delegate represents the interests of all of the AMA-MSS members at your school, and is responsible for communicating the actions at national meetings back to the section. Each eligible campus can send one delegate and alternate delegate to the Assembly meetings.

Secretary/Treasurer. The Secretary/Treasurer is the general record keeper and financial manager of the section and its activities.

Community Service Coordinator. The Community Service Coordinator is primarily responsible for coordinating community service activities and development initiatives.

Membership Recruiter. The Membership recruiter is responsible for coordinating membership recruitment and retention initiatives on campus in addition to being the main liaison to the AMA-MSSOP staff.

Tip: Many sections have found it useful to establish committees to manage various functions unique to them (i.e. membership recruitment and retention, community service activities, legislative action, fund raising, and publicity). There are often two or three offices reserved for first year students in order to make it easier for them to get involved and learn about the AMA (i.e. liaison to the county medical society).

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Membership – Medical Student Section Outreach Program

What is it?

The AMA [Medical Student Section Outreach Program](#) (MSSOP) is a great opportunity for you to get involved in the AMA and make a difference within your local section. Its goal is to gain and retain student members and increase the strength and voice of the AMA's Medical Student Section. MSSOP is a collaborative program that involves the AMA, AMA medical school sections, and state and county medical societies. For the section's membership achievements, the section will receive monetary rewards, proportional to the number of members in your school, which your section can use toward local activities, the Annual Meeting, the Interim Meeting, and more.

How does it work?

The MSSOP recruits throughout the school year for all student non-members. The Fall Student Recruitment begins in June for incoming first-year students. The Winter Recruitment gives you the opportunity to recruit non-member students, as well as encourage renewing students to retain their AMA membership using appropriate lists given to your section. Spring Resident Recruitment offers interested local sections the opportunity to recruit residents eligible for membership in the AMA Resident & Fellow Section.

What are the benefits?

In addition to strengthening the voice of the AMA-MSS, membership is vital to the strength of your individual sections. Membership allows them to build power through numbers in their community project endeavors. The role you play in recruiting and retaining members also will increase the funds to your section. Monetary rewards are credited to your section for every membership generated at your school through the MSSOP.

Taking action: Resources and ideas that your section can use

As your local section evolves, you'll be brainstorming about great activities in which to get involved. Community service projects, participation at meetings, and pursuing leadership opportunities through the AMA-MSS at the local and the national levels are great ways to get involved and make the most of your AMA membership. More information about all of these opportunities is available on the AMA-MSS Web page: www.ama-assn.org/go/mss. Here are some things to keep in mind:

Funding and finances

A steady revenue stream is key to a highly effective AMA medical student section. After all, community service, advocacy, member recruitment, and other activities all cost money. But while raising money may seem like a difficult and time-consuming job, there are fortunately a number of easy ways to fund activities.

Does my section need to establish a bank account?

Maybe. The AMA cannot issue checks (e.g., for Section Involvement Grants or recruiting commissions) payable to individuals. However, if your section is organized as an official club or registered student organization, your medical school administration or university may already assign a bank account for you, in which case the AMA would make checks payable to your medical school.

IMPORTANT: If a bank account is warranted, it must be created through the medical school or using the medical school's tax ID, not the AMA's tax ID. Additionally, some state medical societies play a role in managing the finances of the AMA medical student sections in their states.

External funding sources:

- **AMA Section Involvement Grants.** [Section Involvement Grants](#) (SIG) are awarded to sections implementing projects and events designed to strengthen their sections, promote community service, and further AMA advocacy efforts. Each section is eligible to receive up to \$1,000 per academic year for its section's activities, with a maximum of \$500 per event.
- **AMA recruiting incentives.** AMA medical student sections can earn [commissions](#) -- as much as 30% of all dues collected -- based on the success of their recruiting efforts. The more members recruited above the school's previous year total, the more commission dollars received.
- **State and County Medical Societies.** State and county medical societies often provide funding to local AMA medical student sections. [Contact your state and county societies](#) to ask about potential funding.
- **Medical schools.** AMA medical student sections organized as official clubs or registered student organizations may be eligible for university or medical school funding. Check with the appropriate administrators to determine if such funding is available and how to take advantage of it.

Community service opportunities

- **National Service Project.** Every two years, the AMA-MSS chooses a National Service Project (NSP) theme around which to focus its community service activities. [Improving Health Outcomes Together](#) was selected as the NSP theme for 2014-2016. All AMA medical student sections are encouraged to hold at least one NSP-related event each academic year.

- **Student-run free clinics.** Medical student-run free clinics provide services to underserved and indigent populations and give students the opportunity to work within a clinical setting with physicians and foster a learning environment.
- **Doctors Back to School™.** The AMA Doctors Back to School™ (DBTS) program sends physicians and medical students to local schools and community centers to encourage children from underrepresented minority groups to consider medicine as a career option. [Learn more](#) about how you and your section can become involved in this excellent program.

Learn more about how your section can get involved in community service, in the “[AMA-MSS Community Service Project Idea Guide](#)”.

Advocacy Opportunities

- **[National medical student meetings](#).** The AMA-MSS meets every June in Chicago, IL for a gathering that corresponds to the AMA House of Delegates Annual Meeting. The Section also meets in November in a different location each year for the Interim Meeting. Networking, career advice, advocacy, community service, national speakers in medicine and educational programming are just a few advantages you’ll gain from attending the national medical student meetings. These meetings give students the opportunity to attend programming tailored to deliver relevant information and insights matched to each year and phase of your medical training. You will also have the opportunity to make a difference in the community by participating in a National Service Project event, and the chance to see old colleagues and make new friends.
- **Region meeting.** Each of the seven AMA-MSS Regions come together once a year for an educational and social program designed to increase regional cohesiveness and the visibility of the MSS.
- **[Medical Student Advocacy Day](#).** MSS Advocacy Day is an excellent opportunity to increase your awareness of legislative issues affecting medicine, to foster relationships with legislators through political involvement, and to gain real-life education in the practical aspects of physician advocacy. Advocacy Day activities, which span two days, include interactive educational sessions on effective advocacy and lobbying techniques, briefings on legislative issues currently before Congress, and a full afternoon on Capitol Hill meeting with legislators and their staffs.
- **[State Advocacy Day](#).** Most state organizations also host a medical student advocacy/legislative day at the state capital. Similar to the Medical Student Advocacy Day, this offers the opportunity to increase your awareness of legislative issues affecting medicine, to foster relationships with legislators through political involvement, and to gain real-life education in the practical aspects of physician advocacy on a more local level.
- **[American Medical Association Political Action Committee](#) (AMPAC)** AMPAC is the bi-partisan political action committee of the AMA.

Get recognized!

- **Event of the Month.** The AMA's [Section Involvement Grant \(SIG\)](#) program selects one event every month as recipient of the "Event of the Month". To be eligible, AMA medical student sections must submit a recap Form and photos within 30 days of their event. At the end of the school year, all monthly winners will be voted on by students for one "[Event of the Year](#)" winner.

New this year, SIG provides the opportunity for recap forms to be submitted for events that did

not request or require SIG funding. All events submitted through the recap form are eligible for the Event of the Month nomination.

- **Event of the Year.** All July through April Event of the Month winners are finalists for the Event of the Year. Medical students have the opportunity to submit their top choice for the Event of the Year - chosen by a student vote, and the winner is announced at the national medical student meeting in June.

Leadership opportunities

In addition to leadership opportunities at the local section level, students can pursue national [AMA-MSS leadership positions](#). As one of seven elected members on the Governing Council, a student directs and facilitates Section activities. Students can also get involved with one of the Section's national committees such as Legislation and Advocacy, Global and Public Health, or Communication and Membership, which help carry out initiatives and activities of the Section. Students also hold positions on all seven AMA Councils (Medical Education, Ethical and Judicial Affairs, etc.), the AMA Board of Trustees, and the AMA Foundation Board. The AMA also has student representatives on the National Board of Medical Examiners, National Resident Matching Program Board, American Medical Political Action Committee Board, and the Liaison Committee on Medical Education. In addition, the MSS has regional delegates and alternate delegates who represent students in the AMA House of Delegates. Students can also serve in leadership positions at both the regional and state levels.

Government Internships and Fellowship Opportunities

The AMA Department of Medical Student Services, in conjunction with the Washington, D.C., office of the AMA, is pleased to offer assistance to students seeking to increase their involvement and education in national health policy and in the national legislative activities of organized medicine:

- The Government Relations Advocacy Fellowship (GRAF) is a yearlong, paid fellowship opportunity in the AMA's Washington, D.C., office. GRAF offers medical students a unique opportunity to experience firsthand the intersection of organized medicine and the federal government as it relates to advocacy and policy-making. The application deadline for GRAF is Jan. 31. Visit www.ama-assn.org/go/graf for more information and application materials.
- The Food and Drug Administration's Professional Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement Staff (PASES) is offering an exclusive four-week elective rotation for AMA medical student, resident and fellowship trainee members. The intern will work at FDA headquarters in Silver Spring, MD. A stipend will be provided to help cover living expenses based on level of training (\$1,500 for medical students). Dates of rotation flexible and must be completed by Dec 31st, 2015. The application deadline for the [FDA internship](#) is Feb. 8.

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Appendix 1: Planning a great year: Calendar

Carefully planning your year can make the difference between an effective section and an enthusiastic but disorganized one. Below is a “year at a glance” of key AMA-MSS activities and deadlines to help you plan for what’s ahead. A first step to using these tools is to get the fixed dates for your year. These include your school activities, such as the dates of vacations, major exam blocks, and any state medical society or AMA meetings that have been planned. The current national AMA-MSS dates and deadlines are on the AMA-MSS Web page. Your bylaws may also describe dates for holding elections and other activities. Once all of this information has been compiled, your section can then plan activities around everything else that is happening. Below is a guideline of the national AMA-MSS activities and deadlines that occur each month to further assist in your planning. More information and applications can be found on the AMA-MSS Web site: www.ama-assn.org/go/mss.

It is important to have regular MSS section meetings (every 6-8 weeks at least). These meetings are an important opportunity for education on AMA-MSS issues or other important topics for your student body; in addition, MSS events such as state or national meetings can be publicized, and the section can solicit advice and help from its members in regards to planning future events. These regular meetings are also a way to keep your section excited to be involved in the AMA and be a forum to increase section activism on campus.

June

- National medical student annual meeting in Chicago.

July

- Application deadlines for AMA-MSS standing committees
- Send out letters/e-mails to incoming first years about your AMA-MSS section and ask them to join the AMA-MSS
- Plan your orientation recruitment drive and orientation event(s)

August

- Publicize your orientation events/membership drive around campus
- Deadline for Research Symposium abstracts for national medical student interim meeting

September

- Have a large recruitment drive on campus with free food if possible to attract first years
- Hold elections for any section offices that are reserved for first year students.
- Hold informational sessions on the MSS and perhaps even a resolution-writing workshop to increase excitement about the upcoming Interim Meeting

October

- AMA national medical student interim meeting deadlines
 - Submit resolutions for the interim Meeting.
 - Convention committee’s applications are due.
 - Register for the interim Meeting.
- Application deadlines for:
 - Chair-Elect
 - Student Board of Trustees
 - Regional Delegates/Alternate Delegates
- Hold a community service event. Plan anatomy study break events first years

November/December

- National medical student interim meeting.
- Prepare section for interim meeting by discussing meeting agenda and framing section opinion on the MSS resolutions up for discussion

January

- Deadline for [AMA Foundation Leadership Award program](#), which is presented to 15 medical students, 10 residents/fellows and 5 early-career physicians in recognition of strong, nonclinical leadership skills in advocacy, community service, public health and/or education.
- Application deadlines for student positions on the:
 - AMA Councils
 - Liaison Committee on Medical Education
 - National Resident Matching Program
 - National Board of Medical Examiners
 - AMA Foundation Board
 - Women Physicians Congress Governing Council
 - Minority Affairs Consortium Governing Council
 - Advisory Committee on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues
 - Government Relations Advocacy Fellowship program
- Talk with first years and involved students about running for AMA section leadership positions

March

- Hold section elections before March 15th.
- AMA's National Advocacy Conference and Student/Resident Lobby Day in Washington, DC
- Match Day!

April

- National medical student annual meeting activities
 - Submit resolutions for the annual meeting
 - Convention committee applications for the annual meeting are due—these positions provide a great opportunity for new people to get involved!

May

- Register for the annual meeting to receive the meeting handbook.
- Applications for the Governing Council are due.
- Have a section meeting in order to decide the section's stance on resolutions being submitted to the national medical student meeting

Hopefully, this guide has been useful as a starting point for getting your section up and running, or as a “refresher” for how to bring new energy to your section. Members of the AMA-MSS Governing Council are always happy to provide assistance or answer individual questions to help you best organize your section. An updated [leadership roster](#) is available on the AMA-MSS Web site.

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Appendix 2: Key AMA Contacts

AMA Department of Medical Student Services

Phone: (800) 262-3211 ext. 4746

Email: mss@ama-assn.org

Web: www.ama-assn.org/go/mss

AMA Member Relations Center

Phone: (800) 621-8335

E-mail: msc@ama-assn.org

Web: www.ama-assn.org/go/membership

AMA Membership Group – MSSOP

Phone: (800) 262-3211 ext. 4617

E-mail: student_membership@ama-assn.org

Web: www.ama-assn.org/go/mssop

AMA Mailing Address (all departments)

American Medical Association

330 N. Wabash Avenue, Suite 39300

Chicago, IL 60611

Online Resources

- [Medical Student Section](#)
- [MSS Leadership Structure](#)
- [MSS IOP's and AMA Bylaws](#)
- [Applications and Deadlines](#)
- [Meeting Dates](#)
- [Governing Council](#)
- [Standing Committees](#)
- [Councilors and Liaisons](#)
- [Writing Resolutions](#)

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Section Officer Transition Guide

American Medical Association-Medical Student Section Officer Transitions

Position:

Outgoing Officer:

Incoming Officer:

Position Description:

Timeline (including critical milestones & important dates):

Current Project Status (including major challenges remaining, plan of attack, advice):

Key Contacts (campus administrators, governing council and region leaders, etc.):

Link to Critical Documents (Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.):

Important Account Names & Passwords (section Gmail account, Dropbox, bank account information, etc.)

Discussion Questions

1. Successes. Things that went really well. “Definitely do this again...”
2. Opportunities. Things that could be better. “Here’s what I would change...”
3. Ideas. A goal you didn’t have the chance to accomplish or ideas for further programming. “I didn’t get around to...”
4. Other Suggestions. “Skip this, to focus on this...”