PT Observation as a Volunteer
(Hours from paid positions in physical therapy settings are also welcome)

Observations are documented in the Physical Therapy Centralized Application Service (PTCAS): www.ptcas.org

We require a minimum of two PT Observations for a total of at least 40 hours and the observations must be from at least two different types of PT settings (see types of settings below). One facility may offer more than one type of setting. The average number of volunteer observation hours that our students have completed at each setting is 35 (range 20-300). Most students have three or four PT Observations with an average of 35 hours each.

This observation is not expected to be a mentoring or shadowing experience where all your time is spent with a particular therapist. As a volunteer, you will be doing whatever the facility requests of you to be useful. The expectation is that you will learn about different aspects of physical therapy by volunteering in at least two different types PT settings.

Early during your volunteer time, ask a therapist if she/he will be willing to document the number of hours you spent in the setting. Keep a record of your hours, plus the name and email address of the physical therapist. When you apply to our Program, PTCAS will contact that physical therapist to verify your observation hours.

Locating PT Observations:
To arrange PT observations, you might try the following:
- Look for physical therapy facilities on the internet (search for “Physical Therapy” in a geographic area close to you).
- Contact a PT department and let them know you are seeking to volunteer in preparation for applying to a DPT program. For many years, PT programs have required that applicants gain physical therapy exposure; physical therapists will be familiar with your need to obtain PT observation hours.
- After contacting the PT department of a hospital, you will likely need to work through volunteer services and participate in an orientation program. Let the coordinator know that you wish to volunteer in physical therapy.

Types of PT settings (at least two of these are required):
- Acute Care Hospital
- Rehabilitation/Sub-Acute Rehabilitation
- Nursing Home Facility/Extended Care Facility
- Other Inpatient Facility
- Free-standing PT or Hospital Clinic
- School/Pre-school
- Wellness/Prevention/Fitness
- Industrial/Occupational Health
- Home Health
- Other Outpatient Facility (describe)