

# **Translating Osteopathic Understanding into Community Health**

## **Protocols and Standards**

Last edited: April, 2016

TOUCH (Translating Osteopathic Understanding into Community Health) is a national initiative of the Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents (COSGP). This program encourages osteopathic medical students to engage in service throughout their community, in order to impact those outside of osteopathic medical students and professionals, for the purpose of expanding the osteopathic ideals and principles to those unaware of our professional values.

In accordance with the osteopathic philosophy of treating the whole patient, service goes beyond mere health promotion and can include a wide array of involvement that has a strong positive impact on peoples' lives.

## Standards:

- I. A minimum completion of fifty (50) hours of community service will be required to receive credit for the TOUCH program.
  - A. A record of completed hours must be submitted to the College of Osteopathic Medicine Student Government
    1. The record must be submitted through the official TOUCH website or other official means.
    2. The COM Student Government will certify that the record is complete in accordance with the standards herein.
    3. Travel, Sleep, and other activities not directly related to the service should not be considered when calculating the total hours completed
  - B. The TOUCH year will extend from April 1st to the March 31st of the next year. The required hours must be completed within the current academic year.
    1. Hours completed for this honor must be completed following matriculation into medical school, so hours completed by first year medical students during the summer before matriculation are not valid.
    2. This will cause a shortened TOUCH year for first year medical students (Matriculation - April 1st of the following year).
    3. Completed hours may not be carried over from one academic year to the next.
    4. Student names and hours must be submitted to the COSGP Student Services Committee by the appropriate deadline.
    5. Student names and hours must also be submitted to their local representative or to the online forms within ONE (1) month of the activity or date of service.
    6. COM student organizations that sponsor and organize community service activities will be encouraged to submit the necessary forms acknowledging the students' involvement.

II. If TOUCH credit is deemed to be inaccurate the following protocol should be followed:

- A. First offense: the submission will be stricken from the record and the individual will receive a warning
- B. Second offense: the individual will receive no credit for previous hours and deemed ineligible for TOUCH recognition the remainder of the TOUCH year

III. For the purposes of the TOUCH program, “community service” will be defined as any activity that works to improve the health and wellness of a community. This includes local, state, national, and international activities. The “community” shall be designated as those outside of each institution, in order to spread osteopathic awareness and principles. The parameters of this definition will encompass the following:

- A. Community service is defined as any event that involves active participation or directly benefits the betterment of the community either local or global
- B. Community service activities can be associated with both COM student organizations and external organizations.
- C. Required community service by the COM will count toward TOUCH hours after the first 10 hrs of the required community service. Those hours acquired thereafter are deemed TOUCH hours.
- D. Leadership responsibilities in a COM student organization will not count towards TOUCH hours unless those responsibilities involve participation in a specific community service activity.
  - 1. Normal student organization activities (such as meetings, bringing in speakers, etc.) are not considered community service.
- E. Credit for planning a community service activity will only be given for hours involved in the preparation of materials and setup for an actual event.

1. Parties directly responsible for planning the event will be permitted to claim  $\frac{1}{2}$  time of the total length of the event
    - a) *Example if the event takes 5 hours, the individual(s) responsible for planning will be able to claim 2.5 hours for planning*
  2. Event planning must be reviewed and verified by the COM TOUCH coordinator
  3. Max planning hours allowed to be claimed during a TOUCH year is 15 hours
- F. Administrative tasks that do not take place at the event will not count (i.e. paperwork, filing, organizational tasks).
- G. Administrative tasks as part of the event (checking students in, registration, setting up) are valid for full hour consideration provided the event is TOUCH eligible.
- H. TOUCH credit will only be given for fundraising if it is associated with an actual activity/event.
1. Simply collecting money for a philanthropic cause will not suffice as service to the community.
  2. Fundraising does not necessarily require direct community involvement and can be COM events as long as the money raised is to benefit an external organization.
  3. Events that raising funds for a local charity, foundation, or organization are TOUCH eligible
    - a) *Transporting, actual collection time may be counted*
  4. Fundraisers that are directly benefit school associated clubs or organizing are not eligible for TOUCH credit
- I. TOUCH credit will not be given for volunteering in research, as TOUCH is meant to encourage activity in the community
- J. Individuals will not be able to claim TOUCH credit if any compensation was received

1. Compensation includes: individual receiving any payment or reward for any portion of the service that will directly benefit the individual
  2. This also includes events done through a scholarship (ex: Schweitzer Fellowship)
- K. Donating blood is eligible for ½ hour each time the student donates

IV. The following events have been determined to be ineligible for TOUCH hour credit per the 2015-2016 COSGP Council:

- A. Advocacy Days
  1. Examples: DO Day on the Hill, COM Day on the Hill
- B. Tutoring of classmates/peers
  1. This includes mock practicals/tutoring sessions for students in lower classes
- C. Shadowing a physician/healthcare professional
  1. This includes participating in Ride-Along EMS activities where the student is not participating in patient care.
    - a) *If the student is EMS trained and providing care, the hours may be approved.*
- D. Conference attendance

V. With the assistance of the COM SGA, the COSGP Student Services Committee will have the discretion to grant or deny credit towards TOUCH hours based on the parameters defined in sections 3 and 4.

- A. The COM Executive Board will have the ability to verify completed hours.
  1. Following a review of each individual's completed form, the COM Executive Board will certify each student's completion of the program.

B. Any COM student, faculty member, or administrator will be entitled to review all records pertaining to the TOUCH program.

1. The COM Student Government is required to maintain records of all matters involving the TOUCH program, including meeting minutes, photocopies of both complete and incomplete submitted forms, and records of students who have completed the program.

C. In the event of a dispute regarding granted or denied hours, the contesting student will have the right to meet with the school TOUCH coordinator. The final decision will be made by the COSGP Programs Representative as the National TOUCH coordinator.

D. All records submitted are subject to formal review by COSGP Student Services Committee.

1. Any hours gained greater than 10 in one day must include the supervisor's name and contact information on the submitted entry
2. Failure to supply these requirements will result in zero credit for the volunteer hours gained

VI. If the standards in section 1 are met with satisfaction, the student will receive recognition signifying their completion of their commitment to community service. A letter of commendation will also be sent to the Dean from the President of AACOM suggesting the Dean include the student's commitment to service in his/her Dean's letter.

A. The COM SGA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President will be responsible for maintaining a record of students who have successfully completed the program to better facilitate validity of completion.

B. Those students completing 50 or more hours of community service for the TOUCH year will receive Silver-level recognition. Those completing 100 or more hours will receive Gold-level recognition. The individual from each COM who completes the greatest number of hours will receive Platinum-level recognition.

1. Regarding Platinum status: in the case of a tie, all students at the COM whom achieved the same maximum number of hours will receive Platinum recognition.
- C. Recognition may include, but is not limited to: certificates, plaques, trophies, or other materials as deemed appropriate by the COSGP Student Services Committee.

Please refer any questions about the TOUCH program to the COSGP National Programs Representative at [COGPPProgRep@aacom.org](mailto:COGPPProgRep@aacom.org).