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

Observations are documented in PT Centralized Application Service (PTCAS): www.ptcas.org

We require two PT observations. Each must have a minimum of 20 hours and the two observations must be from different clinical settings. The average number of observation hours that our accepted students have completed at each setting is 45 (range 20-400, median 30). Most applicants have two PT observations; however additional observational experiences are encouraged. Observations beyond two in different settings may be in the same settings (see list below).

As a volunteer, you will be doing whatever is needed to be useful. It is not expected to be a ‘mentoring’ experience where all your time is spent with a particular therapist. Early during your volunteer time, ask a therapist if she/he will be willing to document the number of hours you observed. Keep a record of your hours, and the name and email address of the PT. When you apply to our Program, PTCAS will contact the PT 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.

PT Settings:
- Acute Care
- Rehab/Sub Acute Rehab (Rehabilitation Hospital)
- Extended Care Facilities/Nursing Home/Skilled Nursing facility
- Outpatient Clinic (Private Practice)
- School/Pre-school
- Wellness/Prevention/Fitness
- Industrial/Occupational Health
- Other (if other, describe)