

NRMP® Launches 2026 Voluntary Program Rank Order List Lock Pilot

The National Resident Matching Program® (NRMP) is pleased to announce the Voluntary Rank Order List (ROL) Lock Pilot initiative, with the partnership of the Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, and Vascular Surgery specialties. This pilot will make it possible for the NRMP, and participating programs, to explore the merits and utility of voluntary functionality that would allow programs to “lock” their certified rank order lists in the NRMP’s Registration, Ranking, and Results® (R3®) system. A program voluntarily locking their ROL prior to the certification deadline allows the program to establish a window when interviewed applicants could visit—or not—the program without concern that it might alter the program’s ROL. Programs in those three specialties will have the opportunity to participate beginning with the 2026 Main Residency Match® cycle.

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many disruptions to the transition to residency, including the pivot to virtual interviewing during the recruitment season. Once travel restrictions were lifted, many programs began exploring interview formats ranging from virtual, in-person, and hybrid. Some programs began offering visits after an interview to provide applicants with the opportunity to explore the location and culture of a program. Concerns from applicants were expressed about how programs would evaluate them if they chose not to attend these post-interview visits. A Voluntary ROL Lock was seen as a possibility to address applicant concerns by allowing programs the functionality of locking their certified ROL with visibility of the locked status to applicants and then providing a time for interviewed applicants to visit the program with an assurance that visiting—or not—would not impact their ranking on the list.

In April 2023, the NRMP requested [public comment](#) in consideration of a voluntary locking functionality for program ROLs, and in December 2023, the NRMP received additional feedback at the [Match Summit Meeting](#). In January 2024, the NRMP Board approved a three-year pilot to commence with the 2026 Main Residency Match cycle.

Voluntary ROL Lock Pilot

The planning process for the pilot is underway. The NRMP is pleased to be joined by the representatives of each of the participating specialties to ensure a smooth rollout and to create resources and guidelines for applicants and interested programs.

Additional communications will be forthcoming on the Voluntary ROL Lock Pilot. If you have any questions, please contact admin@nrmp.org.