

Five Steps to a Successful Resident Schedule



How Automated Solutions Enhance Resident Scheduling

The success of resident programs often hinges on a schedule that accounts for all requirements, rules, and provider preferences. The trouble is, creating that schedule can be challenging without the proper tools in place.

Use the checklist below to make sure you have the right processes and tools in place to streamline the creation of effective residency schedules:

Step 1: Simplify Scheduling Tasks

Building a successful resident schedule shouldn't be a cumbersome, time-consuming task. For far too long, residency programs have managed shift building by hand or via Excel worksheets. These processes are tedious at best, and they make it difficult to distribute up-to-date schedules that are readily accessible by all interested parties.

Scheduling software can greatly simplify the process for resident schedulers and program managers. Functionalities include:

- Drag-and-drop shift scheduling
- Real-time adjustments and notifications
- Automated shift swaps



My method for building resident schedules is easy and produces up-to-date, accurate schedules every time.

Step 2: Account for All Required Regulations

Creating a residency schedule necessitates the use of specific rules to ensure residents meet all hour requirements, are placed in appropriate shifts, and satisfy all graduation prerequisites. With automated software, accounting for these regulations is as easy as creating a unique rule for each regulation.

Examples of rules to include in the scheduling algorithm include:

- Specialty rotation hours
- On-call schedules
- Duty hour restrictions
- Shift maximums
- Scheduling blocks
- Continuity of care
- Conferences / training requirements



I can easily build resident schedules that account for all pertinent rules and regulations.

Step 3: Evaluate Resident Supply and Demand

An automated scheduling solution should accurately staff the appropriate number of providers for each shift based on demand and will even alert schedulers when this need isn't met.

For example, a scheduler may know that due to past patient demand, more physicians and residents are needed on Friday nights. The solution will fill any gaps in the schedule to make sure provider supply matches the projected patient census. Other supply and demand considerations include shift swaps and time-off requests.



I can readily build schedules that match resident availability with expected patient demand.

Step 4: Balance Workloads

Ensuring shifts and workloads are equally distributed is important for both resident satisfaction and patient safety. It also means residents have enough time—and enough mental capacity—to attend training sessions and conferences that are crucial to program completion and professional development.

After creating the schedule, evaluate tougher shifts and be sure no one person gets those assignments more than others. Balancing shifts ensures duties are spread evenly among residents, including:

- On-call duties
- Patient load
- Shift allocation



I have a solution or workflow that allows me to consistently prioritize the wellness of my residents while producing the best schedule possible.

Step 5: Consider Resident Preferences and Requests

Countering the effects of burnout means implementing solutions that prioritize provider wellness. Residents and attendings, like all providers, have their preferences when it comes to working shifts. Trying to keep up with preferences by hand—such as preferred junior/senior resident pairings and which call shifts attendings prefer to work—can be challenging.

Automated scheduling software can account for schedule preferences and build them into schedules as much as possible. This capability also:

- Streamlines communication between residents and schedulers
- Prioritizes provider satisfaction
- Automates time-off and shift swap requests
- Alerts providers to any changes made to the schedule in real time
- Creates a single source of information for the most accurate, up-to-date schedule



I can easily and accurately keep track of my team's preferences, time-off requests, and other relevant scheduling information.

If you weren't able to check off all, or even most, of the points on this checklist, it may be time to consider a solution that can help you create better resident schedules. With an automated solution in place, the features and functionality described in this checklist come together to auto-generate accurate, optimized resident schedules each and every time.

When creating schedules manually—whether by spreadsheet or otherwise—the potential for human error is always present. These errors can impact residents' work-life balance, GME requirements, patient care delivery, and more.

Here are other considerations to explore when comparing manual or outdated scheduling methods against an automated scheduling solution like Lightning Bolt:

VS	Spreadsheet	Lightning Bolt
	Time-Consuming Manually creating a schedule becomes inherently more complex with larger groups, specific requirements and limitations, and more intricate specialties.	Time-Saving As an automated solution, Lightning Bolt can reduce the time spent creating schedules by up to 95%. This is a huge win for chief residents and program managers.
VS	Lost or Misplaced Requirements Producing a schedule that accounts for all requirements is no easy feat. Producing a schedule that accounts for all requirements AND is optimized for every single person on the schedule is almost impossible.	Worry-Free Rule Implementation Lightning Bolt's algorithm uses a powerful process called combinatorial optimization. It has the unlimited capacity to accommodate requirements and produce optimized schedules that incorporate scheduling blocks, duty hour restrictions, and other obligations such as continuing education credits.
	Variation Fatigue There's no reliable or accurate way to track last-minute changes or ensure you've got the latest version of a schedule. This can lead to residents either not meeting or exceeding their requirements, which means having to repeat a rotation or wasting some of their valuable time. This also means there may be multiple versions of a schedule floating around.	Real-Time, Accurate Schedule Adjustments Our cloud-based solution is readily accessible by desktop and mobile app and allows for quick schedule changes or swaps with colleagues. This promotes greater schedule transparency across the board. Unlike other platforms, Lightning Bolt updates schedules every five minutes, and it keeps track of all shifts worked as far back as the solution go-live date.
VS	Unable to Track Hours Historical data can easily be lost or modified unbeknownst to the resident or chief resident. When there is not a standardized protocol for tracking and monitoring hours, this data becomes vulnerable.	Transparent and Accurate Shift Reflection Lightning Bolt allows administrators to leverage advanced analytics, detailed reporting, and essential integrations to validate resident competencies and clinical rotation hours.
	Troublesome Integrations with GME Programs Manually importing scheduling data into the designated GME program leaves room for unintentional errors and potential loss of data.	Fast, Flexible, Intuitive Integrations Lightning Bolt automatically feeds scheduling data for residents into their respective GME programs. This ensures compliance and removes the risk of human error.

Want to learn more about the benefits of automated residency scheduling?

[Read our Residency Scheduling Guide](#) or [contact us today!](#)

About Lightning Bolt

Lightning Bolt is the healthcare industry's most advanced physician workforce management solution. In any given month, Lightning Bolt manages more than three million shift hours by auto-generating complete, accurate, and equitable schedules that improve both provider satisfaction and patient access while reducing the administrative workload associated with manual schedule builds.

With more than 20 years of experience, the Lightning Bolt team has developed deep domain expertise in the areas of physician workflow, hospital operations, artificial intelligence, and professional balance. Lightning Bolt is part of PerfectServe's solution portfolio, which accelerates speed to care by improving communication and collaboration throughout the care continuum.



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