

Using Advocacy and Powerful Tools to Increase Family Physician Compensation

REFLECTING THE VALUE FAMILY MEDICINE AND PRIMARY CARE PROVIDES THE NATION

Improving family physician compensation is crucial for addressing primary care workforce shortages in the United States. Retaining existing and attracting new primary care physicians to clinical practice is essential to ensure the sustainability of the specialties and their core benefits to the health care system of the nation – comprehensive, continuous and relationship-based care.

The American Academy of Family Physicians believes compensation for family physicians should reflect your essential value and contributions to the nation's health.¹ No other specialty treats a broader range of conditions than family medicine,² and the care family physicians deliver saves more lives than any other medical specialty.³ You help maintain patients' health and keep overall care costs down by providing continuous care throughout the lifespan of patients of all ages.

To properly reflect the value of family medicine and primary care to the nation's health, the AAFP is continuously fighting for increased payment and less burdensome payment models. We fight on your behalf by advocating for improvements to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule and increases in non-fee-for-service payments that are less burdensome and more aligned with the comprehensive nature of primary care. Achieving equitable family physician compensation that reflects the overall value provided by the core functions of primary care – first-contact, continuous, comprehensive and coordinated care⁴ – requires a combination of strategies, including transparency tools, comprehensive compensation models and value-based incentives.

These strategies aim to ensure that you are fairly compensated for your work and contributions to patient care. The AAFP has advocated to Congress, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and private payers for payment changes that benefit many family physicians. However, not all family physicians benefit from new payment policies. But you all deserve salary structures and levels, benefits and compensation policies that foster equity and reflect your essential role in leading care teams.⁵

The AAFP recognizes the reality that many employed physicians must advocate with their employers to achieve these compensation priorities. Changes in payment policy of the magnitude the AAFP is urging require advocacy and time with private and public sector partners. While the AAFP continues to work toward improving your compensation through our advocacy, we have created a resource to benchmark your salary – whether it is your current income or when negotiating for a new position.

POWERFUL TOOL IN THE HANDS OF AAFP MEMBERS

The transparency of family physician wages and benefits is remarkably valuable to promote fair compensation and equity in your specialty. The AAFP's Family Medicine Career Benchmark Dashboard (www.aafp.org/worth) is a powerful tool to help you achieve equitable compensation, make informed career decisions and feel confident in negotiating your contracts. The dashboard provides data on family physician compensation and information about careers collected from the Know Your Worth Survey in 2023. The AAFP collected nearly 8,000 survey responses from AAFP members and non-members in all different practice settings and every state.⁶ Survey respondents shared information about their careers, compensation, benefits and work-life balance to help build a comprehensive and representative data set that drives the AAFP's Family Medicine Career Benchmark Dashboard.⁷ AAFP members now have access to information that enables you to make informed career decisions and negotiate improved compensation. Several AAFP members have contacted us about their use and appreciation for the dashboard as a member benefit.

"I think everyone, especially family physicians and future family physicians, should know how much others are getting paid."

– AAFP member

"I was applying for a new job and wanted to understand average salaries for negotiation purposes."

– AAFP member

Making de-identified and aggregated compensation information public may also help strengthen the pipeline to family medicine. Current trends indicate that medical trainees are not choosing primary care specialties, such as family medicine, due to the workload and comparatively lower pay.⁸ Informal feedback from faculty in a family medicine interest group who work at various medical schools told the AAFP that medical students have an inaccurate perception that family physician compensation is lower than what has been reported in national surveys. Clear and accessible compensation data, such as that found in our dashboard, can help dispel these myths about the specialty and make it easier for medical students to say YES to family medicine!

"I'm using the dashboard in my effort to recruit medical students and high school students from underrepresented communities to the field of medicine."

– AAFP member

The AAFP's Family Medicine Career Benchmark Dashboard can help support our resident members as they seek the best choice for their first position as a family physician, which is crucial to establishing a commitment to the specialty of family medicine. While compensation is important, it isn't the only factor that matters to existing and aspiring family physicians. They also need to consider how different roles and practice settings can impact their well-being and the benefits being offered. Knowing what to expect from early-career jobs can protect new physicians from burnout and give them the confidence to demand the compensation they deserve.

"I recommend it [the dashboard] to anyone coming out of residency to get a sense of compensation in an area."

– AAFP member

Pay transparency not only benefits individual family physicians by providing them with the information they need to advocate for fair compensation, but it also strengthens the specialty as a whole and supports the workforce pipeline by making family medicine a more attractive career choice. The box to the right provides an example of the information users can gather from the tool to make the most informed decisions for their careers.

MAXIMIZING THE AAFP'S FAMILY MEDICINE CAREER BENCHMARK DASHBOARD AND NEXT STEPS

In addition to the overview data on the next page, the AAFP's Family Medicine Career Benchmark Dashboard allows members to filter for demographics, geographic

regions, position types, clinical settings and employers to see results that are the most meaningful and applicable to their situation.⁷ Members have been sharing how they've used the dashboard through surveys, focus groups and conversations at AAFP events since the tool launched in December 2023.

"The [AAFP's Family Medicine] Career Benchmark Dashboard is a great tool for tracking and advancing your career! Understanding where you stand in relation to industry standards or specific roles can guide your professional development."

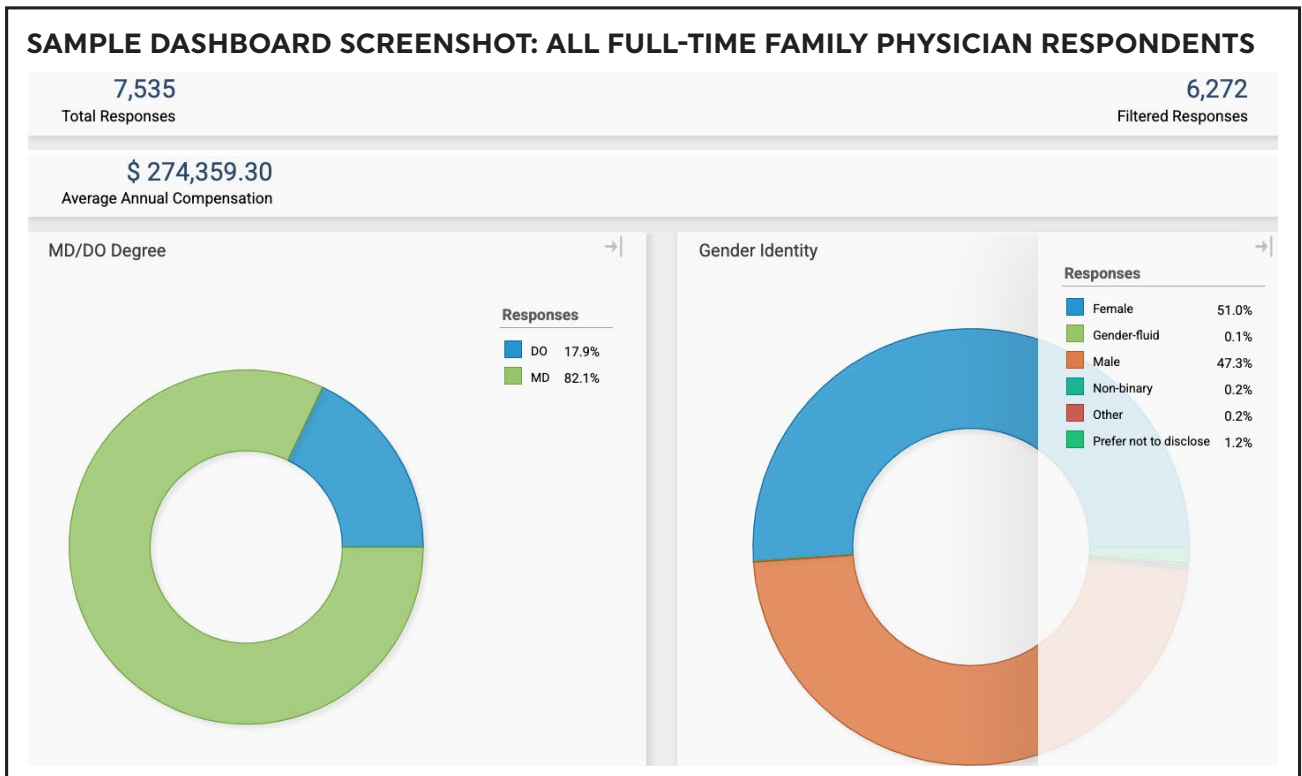
– AAFP member

Along with sharing your appreciation, AAFP members have also offered suggestions to improve the dashboard. The AAFP has incorporated your input as we refine and update the second round of the Know Your Worth Survey. The 2025 survey, launching on August 1, 2025, will include more questions about the clinical practice of family physicians, such as delivering newborns and other areas of clinical focus (e.g., sports medicine, pain management, sleep medicine, etc.), as well as additional questions about care settings. The updates to the survey will enable dashboard users to customize results with more comprehensive scope-of-practice and work-setting information, as well as to take a deeper dive into AAFP

Insights from the 2023 Family Medicine Career Benchmark Dashboard for Family Physicians One to Three Years Out of Residency (Based on 2022 Compensation Data)

1,318 new physicians one to three years out of residency are included in this dashboard data⁹:

- Full-time – 1,211; part-time – 107
- M.D. – 72.2%; D.O. – 27.8%
- Respondents' reported average full-time annual compensation – \$ 236,078.74
- Percentage of respondents reporting an annual compensation ranging from \$200,001 to \$250,000 – 46.9%
- Percentage of respondents reporting between 20 to 29 days of paid time off annually – 51%
- Percentage of respondents reporting the amount of continuing medical education funding received annually – \$2,001 to \$3,000 (26.7%); \$4,001 to \$5,000 (21.4%)
- Percentage of respondents reporting they received a sign-on bonus – 88%



members in independent practices and direct primary care models. The 2025 survey will power an updated dashboard that not only reflects compensation and work information reported in 2025 but also makes trend data accessible to all members as they explore the dashboard.

ENSURING THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THE DASHBOARD

The best way to learn more about family physician compensation and other information, as well as to help us advocate on your behalf for improved payment, is

to PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY! The compensation landscape changes rapidly, and we need new data for the interactive dashboard to continually provide you with updated information. The 2025 Know Your Worth Survey will be available from August 1, 2025, to November 3, 2025, at www.aafp.org/worth. Be on the lookout in AAFP emails and promotions to complete the survey starting August 1 and share it with AAFP member and non-member colleagues. Please do your part to ensure the dashboard continues to provide the information you and your fellow family physicians need to make informed career decisions now and in the future.

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