

Residency statements (called personal statements, letters of intent, and essays) are usually about one page long, and do three things. First, they give you a chance to introduce yourself to a Residency Director and discuss the person behind the activities and achievements listed on your CV. You do this by illuminating why these experiences are personally meaningful, and how they have developed your definition and philosophy of the qualities you strive for as a dentist. Second, they are an opportunity to state your case about why you feel your skills, experiences and perspective will directly contribute to their program. Third, they explain your reasons for seeking residency, and how they relate to your long-term goals.

In fact, a strong statement is rather like a “pre-interview”, responding to questions often asked in interviews, such as: Tell me a little about yourself. What are you looking for in a residency program? What do you feel you would bring to our program? What are you most proud of? Tell me about your most challenging experience and how you overcame it.

Below we have dissected a strong statement. It is strong because it is:

1. Personal (using detailed examples from the writer’s experience)
2. Well-organized (with clear themes explored in a logical fashion)
3. Centered around the three points mentioned above (definition of the qualities of an excellent dentist, strength of the candidate, reasons for choosing this particular residency)

These qualities also make it unique. In the end, it should be clear by the examples, the focus, and the ‘voice’, that only this candidate could have written this essay, which speaks to the candidate’s sincerity. This is what helps a Residency Director distinguish you from other candidates, and see you as an individual as well as a competent and motivated applicant.

The Opening Paragraph: Cory gives us a unique perspective

Cory Evanovich

Dirt, dust, rubble. Children matted with blood and soot of what is left of their home, their neighborhood, their country. These were the children that could have been my two sisters and I if not for a twist of fate. I was faced with this reality when my family took in five of these children and their parents from war-torn [Name of Country] to live with us for four months when I was just eleven years old. We slept five to a room, waited in long lines to use the bathroom, spent every moment wildly playing and enjoying our youth, and ended up becoming life-long friends. This life was a luxury compared to the war they had escaped. My parents’ decision to invite this family into our home and support them stemmed from the mirrored history of our own family - driven out of our home and having to start a new life in a foreign world. At a young age I vowed this blessed life I’ve been given would do good, and thus began my pursuit of an altruistic life integrating healthcare, education and humanity, leading me to pediatric dentistry.

WHY ARE THESE STRONG SUMMARY PARAGRAPHS?

- A. **Content-wise:** Cory uses a striking opener to grab the reader’s attention.
- B. **Format-wise:** The applicant’s themes of altruism, education, and teamwork are reinforced throughout the statement.
 1. Opening paragraph
 2. Education
 3. Altruism
 - 4,5. Altruism, teamwork
 6. Closing paragraph

Main Theme: Education

My desire to become a pediatric dentist is more than my love for children: it is a passion to serve all people at their earliest stages of life in hopes of fostering long-term high quality of life. One experience from dental school that cemented my passion involved Maya, a twenty-year-old refugee, whom I treated during my third year. Maya explained that while living in a refugee camp with her two infants, treating her severe dental decay and infections were low priority despite the associated psychological distress and physical discomfort she endured. **In the coming months, we extracted, restored and arrested her diseased dentition while also discovering her undiagnosed Type I Diabetes after managing her through a medical emergency in my chair.** The complexity of Maya's case coupled with her satisfaction of treatment affirmed my aspiration to combine humanistic patient care with complex dental and medical management, meanwhile demonstrating how disadvantaged and vulnerable humans could be without healthcare starting at a young age. **While Maya was not a pediatric patient, my ability to educate her on the importance of preventive health of herself and two children has, perhaps, changed the course of their own relationship with health care.**

WHY IS THIS A STRONG PARAGRAPH?

- A. **Content-wise:** Cory uses this paragraph to show their deep connection to pediatric dentistry.

This is an excellent use of a clinical example that emphasizes the statement's theme of education.

Main Theme: Altruism

Reflecting back on my life, a number of experiences have unknowingly shaped my career path as it is today. Just after completing elementary school myself, I gave up my summer vacations so that I could tutor younger children. I also had my first foray into working in local hospitals; my role was to go into each hospital room with a cart of books and games and ask if patients would like anything or someone to play with. **It was here I fell in love with patient care in its simplest form and continued to work in hospitals in various facets throughout my life.** I saw the numerous dimensions that impact patient care- beyond medicine. **It also exposed me to the power of inter-professional healthcare teams, which has shaped my desire to continue work in a hospital setting.**

WHY IS THIS A STRONG PARAGRAPH?

- A. **Format-wise:** The topic sentence is a nice segue into other examples of Cory's altruism.
- B. **Content-wise:** The applicant uses this paragraph to emphasize their dedication to serving others and the value they place on inter-professional teamwork.

Main Themes: Altruism and Teamwork

From middle school through college, I continued to empower children of all ages as an educator, coach and healthcare volunteer. These experiences shed light on my ability to work with children and their families, and also showed me the resilience that children exhibit with the right support. I continued my quest for altruism and forayed deeper into holistic healthcare

WHY ARE THESE STRONG PARAGRAPHS?

- A. **Format-wise:** There is a good use of key phrases to give a sense of Cory's dedication and time commitment: "*middle school through college;*" "*beyond my local community.*"

with an emphasis on the pediatric population while I was in dental school. My first act as elected [Name of Role] of the inter-professional student organization, [Name of Organization], was to expand the services our organization provided to vulnerable children of the San Francisco Bay Area. By including pharmacy and medical students, we were able to grow our outreach events from oral screenings only to providing more holistic health screenings. Within the last three years, we have diagnosed and referred hundreds of children to appropriate health facilities whom would have otherwise not received care.

Beyond my local community, I serve as a board member of a medical relief organization, the [Name of Organization], aiding victims of war and disaster around the world. We have organized healthcare teams including audiology, gynecology, and mental health to serve communities struck by conflict. Participating with the [Name of Organization] and [Name of Association] allow me to advocate for those whose voices are not heard and offer my education within a collaborative healthcare team.

The Closing Paragraph: Cory ties it all together

Pursuing a career as a pediatric dentist allows me to continue my commitment at the frontline of dental advancements by preventing and treating severe forms of oral and systemic disease within academic and hospital settings, locally and globally. As I have witnessed in various contexts throughout my career, intervention and empowering people in their most malleable years is essential in changing life outcomes. After searching for the right balance of altruism, my cultural background, work and academic experience has finally led me to find it in pediatric dentistry.

WHY ARE THESE STRONG (CONT):

C. Content-wise: Cory elaborates more on their ability work in teams, especially interdisciplinary teams, and their dedication to providing access to care for pediatric populations.

Here the applicant is focused on showing the program director they have a significant commitment towards advocacy for the underserved which ties back into their altruistic theme.

WHY IS THIS A GOOD CLOSING PARAGRAPH?

A. Format-wise: Cory begins the paragraph by discussing their career goal and tying it back to their over-arching themes. They use the paragraph to state why they want to complete a pediatric residency.

B. Content-wise: This is an excellent summary of the applicant's unique journey to pursue pediatric dentistry and illustrates that they have been working towards this goal for much of their life.

Please see the next page for the complete one-page essay.

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From middle school through college, I continued to empower children of all ages as an educator, coach and healthcare volunteer. These experiences shed light on my ability to work with children and their families, and also showed me the resilience that children exhibit with the right support. I continued my quest for altruism and forayed deeper into holistic healthcare with an emphasis on the pediatric population while I was in dental school. My first act as elected [Name of Role] of the inter-professional student organization, [Name of Organization], was to expand the services our organization provided to vulnerable children of the San Francisco Bay Area. By including pharmacy and medical students, we were able to grow our outreach events from oral screenings only to providing more holistic health screenings. Within the last three years, we have diagnosed and referred hundreds of children to appropriate health facilities whom would have otherwise not received care.

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