



## Graduate Medical Education Policy

### GME PHYSICIAN IMPAIRMENT POLICY

Applies to: Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine (ESFCOM) Graduate Medical Education (GME) and all accredited post-graduate medical training programs (i.e. residency or fellowship) and non-accredited clinical fellowship programs sponsored by the College of Medicine.

GMEC Approval: 06/15/2021

#### 1.0 Policy Statement:

It is the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine policy to create an environment to assist residents in maintaining wellness and in proactively addressing any health condition or impairment that could potentially affect their health, well-being, and performance.

#### 2.0 Definitions

**Designated Institutional Official (DIO):** The individual in a Sponsoring Institution who has the authority and responsibility for all of that institution's ACGME-accredited programs.

**Fatigue mitigation:** Methods and strategies for learning to recognize and manage fatigue to support physician/caregiver well-being and safe patient care (e.g., strategic napping; judicious use of caffeine; availability of other caregivers; time management to maximize sleep off-duty; learning to recognize the signs of fatigue, and self-monitoring performance and/or asking others to monitor performance; remaining active to promote alertness; maintaining a healthy diet; using relaxation techniques to fall asleep; maintaining a consistent sleep routine; exercising regularly; increasing sleep time before and after call; and ensuring sufficient sleep recovery periods).

**Health Condition or Impairment:** For the purposes of this policy and procedure, a health condition or impairment is defined as including (but not limited to) any physical health, mental health, substance use/abuse, or behavioral condition that has the potential to adversely affect the practice of medicine and/or impair performance.

**Program Director (PD):** The individual designated with authority and accountability for the operation of the residency/fellowship program.

**Trainee:** A physician-in-training at an ACGME-accredited graduate medical education program. The term includes interns, residents, and fellows or other trainees enrolled in an educational program whose education falls under the purview of the ESFCOM Office of Graduate Medical Education.

#### 3.0 Responsibilities

GMEC through the DIO; Associate Dean for GME; Program Directors; Program Faculty and Staff; Trainees

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## 4.0 Procedures

Physician health is essential to quality patient care and a just culture. An impaired healthcare provider is a risk to patients and to their colleagues. We all have the responsibility to report incidences of impairment for patient safety and provider well being. Timely identification and diagnosis of an impairment may be both career and life saving.

### Faculty & Trainee Responsibilities

Trainees and faculty members must demonstrate an understanding of their personal role in the assurance of their fitness for work, including management of their time before, during, and after clinical assignments and recognition of impairment, including from illness, fatigue, and substance use, in themselves, their peers, and other members of the health care team. (CPR VI.B.4.c) Trainees and faculty members are encouraged to alert the program director or other designated personnel or programs when they are concerned that another Trainee, medical student, or faculty member may be displaying signs of burnout, depression, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, or potential for violence.

### Program Director Responsibilities (CPR VI.C.)

The program director has the same responsibility to address well-being as they do to evaluate other aspects of Trainee competence. Program directors must ensure policies and programs that encourage optimal Trainee and faculty member well-being and demonstrate efforts to enhance the meaning that each Trainee finds in the experience of being a physician, including:

- protecting time with patients;
- minimizing non-physician obligations;
- providing administrative support;
- promoting progressive autonomy and flexibility, and;
- enhancing professional relationships.

In addressing well-being, the program director's responsibilities, in partnership with the Sponsoring Institution, also include:

- attention to scheduling, work intensity, and work compression that impacts resident well-being;
- evaluating workplace safety data and addressing the safety of residents and faculty members;
- attention to Trainee and faculty member burnout, depression, and substance abuse.

### Identifying impairment

Each training program must provide education to its Trainees regarding physician impairment, including information on identifying the signs and symptoms. This training should include elements of self-assessment as well as identifying signs of impairment in other practitioners and the steps for reporting suspected impairment.

Programs must:

- educate all faculty members and residents to recognize the signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation;

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- educate all faculty members and residents in alertness management and fatigue mitigation processes; and,
- encourage residents to use fatigue mitigation processes to manage the potential negative effects of fatigue on patient care and learning.

## Reporting Impairment

When health conditions or impairment that affect the Trainee's ability to provide care safely are known or suspected, the concerned individual must communicate issues with the Program Director or their designee as soon as possible. Anyone on the care team who suspects impairment is empowered to take appropriate measures to remove a Trainee from clinical duties immediately in order to keep patients, staff, and Trainees safe.

The program director or their designed must:

- Speak directly with the resident about the concerns and take the appropriate actions providing guidance and options ensuring the resident is aware of options to seek help if needed.
- Remove the Trainee from the clinical service if needed.
- Consult with the Designated Institutional Official, resulting in written documentation outlining the Trainee's performance deficiencies and action plan in accordance with the appropriate policies.

## Self-reporting

If a Trainee has concerns about his/her own well-being and believes their performance may be impaired, as defined above, the Trainee shall immediately contact their program director, or designee. The Trainee will be referred to appropriate sources for evaluation, and, if necessary, treatment. Should the resident be required to take a leave of absence for treatment, the resident should follow the appropriate GME Policy.

## Washington Physicians Health Program

Trainees are encouraged to access the Washington Physician Health Program (WPHP) for any health condition or concern about a potential health condition ([wphp.org](http://wphp.org)). The WPHP is a service provided by the state which encompasses early intervention, assessment, treatment referral and post-treatment monitoring for health professionals who may not be able to practice safely due to an impairing or potentially impairing health condition. Trainees may self-refer at any time, without or prior to any workplace intervention. Wellness resources are also provided on their website. This service is confidential. Request for paid leave or unpaid time off in order to participate in WPHP confidential evaluations and monitoring will be considered on a case by case basis, and may qualify for Family Medical Leave (FML).

## Other Resources

Access to confidential, affordable mental health assessment, counseling, and treatment, including access to urgent and emergent care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, along with tools for self-screening for burnout, depression, and substance abuse can be found through the Employee Assistance Program and on the [GME website](#). The ACGME also offers a suite of resources specifically designed for the GME community to promote

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well-being, mitigate the effects of stress, and prevent burnout. These include a variety of on-demand tools, such as a video skill-building workshop, podcasts, and an app (<https://acgme.org/What-We-Do/Initiatives/Physician-Well-Being/>).

## 5.0 Related Policies

GME Grievance and Due Process; Renewal and Promotion; Trainee Appointment Policy

## 6.0 Key Search Words

Impairment; Leave; Reporting; Inappropriate behavior; Safety
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## 7.0 Revision History

<b>GMEC Approval: Revision/Review Date(s)</b>
Approved 06/15/2021

**Responsible Office:** ESFCOM GME Office

**Policy Contact:** Designated Institutional Official

**Supersedes:** N/A