UNIVERSITY OF IOWA HEALTH CARE

GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

POLICY ON PAID TIME OFF (PTO) AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE (LOA)

Core Values Informing Policy

- Navigating time away from training requires collaboration between each resident/fellow and their Program Director (PD)
- Maintaining benefits & PD flexibility to manage all PTO and potential LOAs is a priority
- This GMEC Policy should be considered a minimum leave; program directors should use discretion in allowing more time off as their board requirements and program expectations allows.
- The PD holds responsibility for managing request review, discussions, and decision-making with residents/fellows, including current information on impact of an extended LOA on successful completion of program to earn board eligibility and program-specific requirements
- The PD must seek input/approval from GME Office for atypical or extended LOA requests, including all possible extensions of training
- GMEC adheres to all ACGME and certifying board requirements and federal and state laws regarding leave

Policy Statement

Pursuing Graduate Medical Education is a complex endeavor that necessitates planning and open communication between the resident/fellow and their PD. Board certification is available for most GME programs, and we work collaboratively with GME trainees to provide support necessary to achieve board eligibility. This policy is applicable for all trainees on GME contracts regardless of whether their program is accredited by ACGME.

Each accrediting body has program-specific expectations for successful completion. All specialty certifying boards have unique expectations for board-eligibility, some of which restrict the amount of time away from clinical work that can be taken without having to extend training. **It is the responsibility of the PD to remain current on all requirements to ensure accurate advice for each resident/fellow regarding a potential LOA from their program**. Any planned extension of training beyond the standard period, for any reason, should be reviewed and approved by the central GME office in advance.

Key Points

1. **Annual Paid Time Off**: Each resident/fellow is eligible for 4 weeks of paid time off (PTO) each year (3 weeks of vacation + 1 week of sick time). Vacation weeks can be scheduled ahead of time; sick time is flexible and exists to ensure trainees are able to accommodate their personal health

needs. Weeks are defined as calendar weeks unless otherwise specified by program. PTO and sick time do not carry over year to year. Residents/fellows must arrange for PTO with their PD. Additionally, each PD manages an equitable approach to provide time away for short-term illnesses, holidays, educational conferences, and to interview for future positions.

2. **Personal Health Care Needs**: All GME programs encourage their residents and fellows to seek health care when needed. Each program must have processes which permit time off to attend their health-related appointments.
3. **Other Leave**: Residents/fellows may face circumstances that require time away from training, including the resident/fellow's own health needs, parental responsibilities, caregiving responsibilities, bereavement, or other qualifying circumstances. The PD is responsible for advising residents/fellows about potential training extension, in the context of their personal and board eligibility requirements. PDs considering whether a training extension may be necessary must work closely with the GME Office to ensure consistent decision-making.
4. **Federal and State Statutory Requirements**: Federal and state law set some minimum entitlements for all employees regarding leave. When more than one leave entitlement applies to the same absence, the applicable leaves will run concurrently to the extent permitted by law and University policy. GME leave is granted in addition to the minimum entitlements under the law. PDs should contact the Leave and Disability Administration and the GME Office to ensure consistent application and communication.

Leave of Absence:

1. **General Principles**
   A. Types of leave: All residents/fellows are eligible for Parental, Medical, or Caregiver Leave if needed. Parental Leave is intended for use by non-birth parents. A birth parent's need for parental leave is provided under Birthing Leave.
   B. Leave parameters: Consistent with ACGME Institutional Requirements, residents and fellows are eligible for a minimum of six weeks of paid medical, parental, and/or caregiver leave for qualifying reasons during their GME program, beginning on the first day of employment. The first six weeks of qualifying leave taken during their program will be paid at 100% of the resident/fellow's stipend with continuation of applicable health and disability benefits. Further leave beyond six weeks requires explicit approval by GME and may be unpaid. The leave may be continuous or intermittent, but it must adhere to program specific policies. Any required extension of training resulting from an approved LOA will be supported with stipend and benefits.
   C. Communication: The need for leave of absence can be unexpected and unpredictable. Residents/fellows should communicate with their PD in advance for planned LOA and as soon as possible for urgent/unexpected LOA. All requests for an extended (more than 3 weeks) LOA must be submitted in writing to the PD for review and approval, following discussion of potential ramifications (e.g. whether necessary to extend training). A copy of the approved request must be filed with the GME Office. The PD must inform the GME office prior to approval of any leave request beyond 6 weeks.

D. Federal and State Statutory Requirements: Federal law (FMLA) requires public employers to offer up to 12 work weeks of *unpaid* leave per year for qualifying conditions, while maintaining health benefits and job position. FMLA eligibility begins after 1 year of employment. Iowa Paid Parental Leave (IPPL) requires public employers to offer up to 4 weeks of paid leave for birthing or adoptive parents, and one week of paid leave for non-birthing parents. When more than one leave entitlement applies to the same absence, the applicable leaves will run concurrently to the extent permitted by law and University policy. UIHC is required to provide this entitlement via a notice from the Leave and Disability Administration (LDA), but *paid* GME leave is granted beyond what is required by FMLA and IPPL.

2. Birthing Leave:

A. Amount of Leave: A resident/fellow birthing parent is entitled to take paid leave for each pregnancy. The GME office supports 6 weeks of birthing leave for each pregnancy independent of other PTO. If medically necessary either before or after delivery, additional paid LOA up to 6 weeks is available upon receipt of written documentation from the resident/fellow's treating provider (i.e. at least 12 weeks of paid leave). Weeks are defined as calendar weeks unless otherwise specified by program. Birthing leave is available within 12 months of the birth of a child. The leave may be intermittent, but intervals must be approved by the PD. If a birthing parent desires further time away from the program for personal reasons, consultation with and approval by the PD is required to schedule additional LOA, which is unpaid. The PD must inform trainees of the impact on their board eligibility and potential need for extension of training. The PD must inform the GME office of any birthing leave beyond 6 weeks.

B. Resident/Fellow Choice: Residents/fellows may elect to use available PTO in connection with additional time away when permitted by applicable requirements. At least one week of PTO must be reserved for use outside of the 6 weeks of approved birthing leave.

C. Benefit Coverage Retention: The resident/fellow on birthing leave will retain benefit coverage for up to 12 weeks. Should leave exceed 12 weeks as outlined above necessitating a birth-related unpaid LOA, the resident/fellow can retain coverage through payment of premium costs.

3. Parental (non-birth Parent):

A. Amount of Leave: We recognize the importance of the early development of a relationship between a parent and their new child, including if the child joins the family by birth, adoption, foster placement, legal guardianship, or the arrival of a child through gestational surrogacy. Thus, non-birth parents on a GME contract are eligible for up to 6 weeks of paid LOA once per GME program. UI Health Care additionally renews this paid leave benefit for every three years of continuous GME training (for programs longer than 3 years). Weeks are defined as calendar weeks unless otherwise specified by program. This parental leave is available within 12 months of the birth or adoption of a child. The leave may be intermittent, but intervals must be approved by the PD. The PD must inform trainees of the impact on their board

eligibility and potential need for extension of training. The PD must inform the GME office of any leave beyond 6 weeks.

B. Resident/Fellow Choice: Residents/fellows may elect to use available PTO in connection with additional time away when permitted by applicable requirements. At least one week of PTO must be reserved for use outside of the 6 weeks of approved medical, parental or caregiver leave.

C. Benefit Coverage Retention: Resident/fellow benefits will continue uninterrupted during this paid LOA for up to 6 weeks. Any LOA beyond 6 weeks must be approved by the PD and the GME office on a case-by-case basis. For any extended LOA, the resident/fellow will retain benefit coverage up to 12 weeks, after which they can retain coverage through payment of premium costs.

4. Medical or Caregiver Leave:

A. Amount of Leave: All residents/fellows are eligible for Medical or Caregiver Leave. Any resident/fellow on a GME contract is eligible for up to 6 weeks of paid LOA once per GME program.

B. Resident/Fellow Choice: Residents/fellows may elect to use available PTO in connection with additional time away when permitted by applicable requirements. At least one week of PTO must be reserved for use outside of the 6 weeks of approved medical, parental or caregiver leave.

C. Benefit Coverage Retention: Resident/fellow benefits will continue uninterrupted during this paid LOA for up to 6 weeks. Any LOA beyond 6 weeks must be approved by the PD and the GME office on a case-by-case basis. For any extended LOA, the resident/fellow will retain benefit coverage up to 12 weeks, after which they can retain coverage through payment of premium costs.

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