

## UNIVERSITY OF IOWA HEALTH CARE

## GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

## POLICY FOR GME TRAINEES ON PAID TIME OFF (PTO) AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE (LOA)

## Core Values Informing Policy:

- *Intentional collaboration for time away from training is required between each resident/fellow and their Program Director (PD), as each trainee is on an individualized developmental trajectory*
- *Continue existing benefits & PD flexibility to manage all PTO and potential LOAs*
- *PD responsible to manage review of requests, discussions, & decision-making with resident/fellow physicians, including current information on impact of an extended LOA on successful completion of program to earn board eligibility*
- *PDs must seek counsel from Office of GME for unique requests for extended LOAs*
- *Continue to meet ACGME requirements and their intersections with certifying board expectations*

Pursuing Graduate Medical Education is a complex endeavor that necessitates intentional planning and open communications between the resident/fellow physician 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 unique expectations for successful completion of a GME program, and all certifying boards have unique expectations to become board-eligible. It is responsibility of the PD to remain current on all evolving requirements to ensure best advice for each resident/fellow whenever interest arises to take an extended LOA from their program.

## Key clarifications:

- I. Amount of Paid Time Off: Each house staff physician or dentist is eligible for 3 weeks of PTO each year. House staff members 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.
- II. Personal Health Care Needs: All GME programs encourage their house staff members to seek health care when needed. Each program must have processes which permit time off to attend their medical, dental, and mental health care appointments.
- III. Birthing Leave:
  - A. Amount of Leave: Birthing parent is entitled to take up to 6 weeks of paid maternity leave for each pregnancy. If medically necessary either before or after delivery, additional paid LOA up to 4 weeks is available upon receipt of written documentation from the house staff's physician (i.e. up to 10 weeks of paid leave). 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. To ensure timely completion of board eligibility requirements, a house staff member may choose to use their annual PTO to shorten amount of time away from training. The PD will work closely with the resident/fellow to assess if birthing LOA will require extension of training to complete board requirements; during any training extension UI Health Care will provide stipend and benefits. A copy of the approved request to extend training must be filed in the trainee's file in the Office of GME.
  - B. Benefit Coverage Retention: Should leave exceed 10 weeks as outlined above necessitating a maternity-related unpaid LOA, the resident/fellow can retain benefit coverage through payment of premium costs during the extended LOA.

IV. Other Potential Leaves of Absence: Additional time away from training may be necessary to address pressing life events such as medical, parental, bereavement, or caregiver needs which interfere with the resident/fellow physician's capacity to fully participate in their GME program. The PD is responsible for decision-making about potential training extension, which includes assessment of the professional, developmental, and personal needs of the resident/fellow to complete essential components of their training to earn board eligibility. PDs considering whether a training extension may be necessary must work closely with the Office of GME to ensure well-informed decision making.

- a. *Requests for a LOA* beyond PTO of 3 weeks each year must be submitted in writing for review, discussion, and approval by the PD; this benefit is available starting on the first day of employment at UI Health Care.
- b. *Impact of Time Away from Training on Board Certification Requirements*: The PD must ensure the resident/fellow is aware of current Board Certification Requirements and if any concerns exist about their individual developmental trajectory which might require a training extension.

V. More Details Regarding Medical, Parental (non-birth Parent) or Caregiver Leave:

A. Consistent with ACGME requirements, an extended LOA up to 6 weeks is available to address medical, parental (non-birth parent), or caregiver needs; it is available as a paid LOA once during residency or fellowship training with continuation of all benefits.

B. All resident/fellow physicians and dentists including birth parents are eligible for a Medical or Caregiver LOA if needed. Parental LOA is intended for use by non-birth parents. A birth parent's need for parental leave is provided under existing Birthing Leave as outlined in Section III.

C. *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 adoption. Thus, non-birth parents on a GME contract are eligible for up to 6 weeks of paid LOA once during their GME program. This parental leave is available within 4 months of the birth or adoption of a child.

D. *Resident/Fellow Choice*: During a medical, parental, or caregiver LOA, a house staff member may choose to use their annual PTO in order to ensure timely completion of board eligibility requirements. However, they are not required to exhaust their full allotment of annual PTO. One additional week of PTO can be reserved for use outside of the 6 weeks of approved medical, parental or caregiver leave.

E. *Benefit Coverage Retention*: House staff benefits will continue uninterrupted during this paid LOA for up to 6 weeks. If further LOA is necessary and approved by the PD, it will be unpaid and the resident/fellow can choose to retain benefits by paying premium costs during the prolonged LOA.

F. *Documentation*: All requests for an extended 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 in the trainee's file in the Office of GME.

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