

Augusta University  
House Staff Policies and Procedures

Policy

HS 4.0 House Staff Leave

Source

Graduate Medical Education Office

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1.0 Purpose

To describe the procedures governing leave for interns/residents/fellows (House Staff) at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University.

2.0 Rationale

2.1 Per the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), Sponsoring Institutions must have a policy for vacation and leaves of absence (see HS7.0), consistent with applicable laws. This policy must:

- 2.1.1 Provide House Staff with a minimum of six weeks of approved medical, parental, and caregiver leave(s) of absence for qualifying reasons that are consistent with applicable laws at least once and at any time during an ACGME-accredited program, starting the day the House Staff is required to report;
- 2.1.2 Provide House Staff with at least the equivalent of 100 percent of their salary for the first six weeks of the first approved medical, parental, or caregiver leave(s) of absence taken;
- 2.1.3 Provide House Staff with a minimum of one week of paid time off reserved for use outside of the first six weeks of the first approved medical, parental, or caregiver leave(s) of absence taken;
- 2.1.4 Ensure the continuation of health and disability insurance benefits for House Staff and their eligible dependents during any approved medical, parental, or caregiver leave(s) of absence;
- 2.1.5 Describe the process for submitting and approving requests for leaves of absence;
- 2.1.6 Be available for review by House Staff at all times; and,
- 2.1.7 Ensure that each of its ACGME-accredited programs provides its House Staff with accurate information regarding the impact of an extended leave of absence upon the criteria for satisfactory completion of the program and upon a House Staff's eligibility to participate in examinations by the relevant certifying board(s).

2.2 This HS4.0 policy was implemented to ensure compliance with ACGME requirements as stated in 2.1, applicable State laws as stated in 3.5, and University System of Georgia policies.

3.0 Procedures

3.1 Each training Program must have a program-specific policy that details the process for submitting and approving leave as stated in 2.1.5. This policy must be included in the program handbook and/or be available for review by House Staff at all times as stated in 2.1.6. This policy must also provide accurate information regarding eligibility for promotion and participation in certifying board examinations as stated in 2.1.7. These policies cannot contradict the Graduate Medical Education (GME) policies and if contradiction is noted, GME policies including HS4.0 supersede program-specific policies. See HS41.0.

3.2 Annual Leave (Vacation)

- 3.2.1 Twenty-one days (15 weekdays and 6 weekend days) of Annual Leave are granted to each House Staff within every contract year.
- 3.2.2 Annual Leave must be taken in seven-day blocks (typically five consecutive weekdays with two adjacent weekend days) unless otherwise approved by the Department Chairperson and/or Program Director.
- 3.2.3 Only fifteen weekdays of annual leave are provided. Therefore, if a Program does not assign duties on weekends, only fifteen days of Annual Leave are granted per contract year.
- 3.2.4 Unused Annual Leave days from one contract year may not be carried over to the next contract year.
- 3.2.5 Annual Leave must be taken within the contract period, and no compensation will be received for unused days.
- 3.2.6 The VA must pre-approve Annual Leave prior to the leave being taken during VA duty periods.

3.3 Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave

3.3.1 Fourteen days of paid Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave are granted to each House Staff within every contract year.

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- 3.3.2 Up to seven unused days of Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave from the previous contract year may be carried forward. Therefore, House Staff may receive a maximum of twenty-one calendar days of Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave per contract year when previous year's unused days are applied (if applicable).
- 3.3.3 Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave days must be taken within the contract period, and no compensation will be received for unused days. Moreover, Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave days should only be utilized for personal medical/sick/caregiver reasons.
- 3.3.4 For purposes of this policy, caregiver leave is defined as leave taken by a House Staff to care for their immediate family (i.e., spouse, child, or parent) who has a serious health condition.
- 3.3.5 For purposes of this policy, medical and sick leave are defined as leave taken by a House Staff for a health condition that makes them unable to perform the essential functions of their job.

3.4 Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave

- 3.4.1 House Staff are granted Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave for up to six weeks once and at any time during the course of their training (per Program). This Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave will be taken in the following order:
  - 3.4.1.1 Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave as described in 3.3 then
  - 3.4.1.2 Annual Leave as described in 3.2 then
  - 3.4.1.3 Additional Parental Leave as described below in 3.5 (if the House Staff member meets criteria) then
  - 3.4.1.4 Additional leave if needed to meet State laws and ACGME requirements.
- 3.4.2 House Staff will receive full salary during their first episode of Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave for up to six weeks.
- 3.4.3 House Staff are eligible for at least one additional week of paid time off reserved for use outside of the first six weeks of the first approved Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave taken.
- 3.4.4 Additional leave taken beyond the first six weeks of Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave plus the one week of additional paid time off (as stipulated in 3.4.3) must be taken as Leave Without Pay (LWOP) unless the House Staff qualifies for Additional Parental Leave (see section 3.5). House Staff on LWOP are eligible for continuation of health and disability insurance benefits for themselves and their eligible dependents. Premiums charged to employees for insurance continue to be the responsibility of the House Staff when on LWOP.
- 3.4.5 House Staff are eligible for the Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave beginning on the day they are required to report for their training Program (typically July 1<sup>st</sup>).

3.5 Additional Parental Leave

- 3.5.1 Parental leave is mandated by the University System of Georgia (USG) pursuant to Georgia statute "HB 146" ([Georgia General Assembly - HB 146 \(ga.gov\)](http://www.ga.gov)) as of July 1, 2021. If a House Staff has already taken their one-time Extended Medical/Parental/Caregiver Leave as stipulated in 3.4, they may be eligible for Additional Parental Leave.
- 3.5.2 House Staff must be employed for at least 6 months before being eligible for Additional Parental Leave under this provision.
- 3.5.3 Qualifying events for Additional Parental Leave include:
  - 3.5.3.1 Birth of a child to an eligible House Staff
  - 3.5.3.2 Placement of a minor child for adoption with an eligible House Staff
  - 3.5.3.3 Placement of a minor child for foster care with an eligible House Staff
- 3.5.4 House Staff must provide the Department Chairperson with a Paid Parental Leave Request ([https://www.augusta.edu/hr/university/university\\_benefits/documents/parental\\_leave\\_request.pdf](https://www.augusta.edu/hr/university/university_benefits/documents/parental_leave_request.pdf)) at least 30 days prior to the proposed initial leave date (or if the leave is not foreseeable, as soon as possible). This document must be forwarded to the GME Office.
- 3.5.5 Additional Parental Leave must occur within 12 months of the qualifying event and cannot exceed 120 hours during any rolling 12-month period, regardless of how many qualifying events occur during that period.

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- 3.5.6 Additional Parental Leave may be intermittent and need not be continuous for a 120-hour period. Additional Parental Leave can be taken in increments of less than 8 hours. Therefore, Additional Parental Leave must be accounted for in hours and tracked by the Program.
- 3.5.7 If the House Staff qualifies for FMLA, which preserves an employee's position but does not provide compensation, the 120 hours of paid Additional Parental Leave are to be taken concurrently with FMLA leave.
- 3.5.8 Eligibility for paid Additional Parental Leave under this provision does not guarantee eligibility for FMLA benefits.
- 3.5.9 Paid Additional Parental Leave for qualifying House Staff does not impact a House Staff's spouse or partner who may also qualify under this provision as a USG employee.
- 3.5.10 Unused Additional Parental Leave has no cash value, is not transferrable, and may not be carried over for future use.
- 3.5.11 Additional Parental Leave may count towards leave maximums allowed by ACGME specialty program requirements for graduation and/or specialty board requirements for board eligibility/certification. House Staff, in conjunction with their Program Director and Program Coordinator, are responsible for ensuring that all leave taken is compliant with these requirements.
- 3.6 The Department is responsible for informing the GME Office in writing at least two weeks prior to the planned absence if:
- 3.6.1 House Staff will be on leave greater than two weeks, and/or
- 3.6.2 House Staff needs to be placed on LWOP as stipulated in 3.4.4.
- 3.7 Approval of leave of any type does not necessarily obviate any GME program graduation requirements or specialty-specific certifying board eligibility requirements and may necessitate extension of the House Staff's training period. The Program must clearly communicate this with House Staff as stated in 2.1.7.
- 3.8 For House Staff that must undergo an extension of their training (for any reason), pro-rated Annual Leave and Regular Medical/Sick/Caregiver Leave will be provided based on the length of the extension effective the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the new contract period. Additional Parental Leave may be provided as required by State law. ACGME requirements including those regarding leave will be followed as well.

  
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David Hess, M.D. 7/13/22  
Dean, Medical College of Georgia Date

  
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Natasha M. Savage, M.D. 7/13/22  
Senior Associate Dean, Graduate Medical Education and DIO Date