

# Georgia Health Sciences University House Staff Policies and Procedures

## Policy

### HS 10.0 House Officer Duty Hours & Work Environment

## Source

### Graduate Medical Education Office

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#### 1.0 Purpose

To provide an Institutional statement regarding House Officers duty hours and work environment as mandated by the ACGME and the Joint Commission by the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations

#### 2.0 Procedure

##### 2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 **Duty hours:** all clinical and academic activities related to the Residency Program, i.e., patient care (both inpatient and outpatient), administrative duties related to patient care, the provision for transfer of patient care, time spent in-house during call activities, and scheduled academic activities such as conferences. Duty hours do not include reading and preparation time spent away from the work site.

2.1.2 **In-house call:** those duty hours beyond the normal workday when House Officers are required to be immediately available in the assigned Institution.

2.1.3 **Moonlighting:** Patient care activities external to the educational program that residents/fellows engage in at sites used by the educational program (internal moonlighting) and other healthcare sites. Time spent by residents in Internal and External Moonlighting (as defined in the ACGME Glossary of Terms) must be counted towards the 80-hour Maximum Weekly Hour Limit. PGY-1 residents are prohibited from moonlighting. Any resident on J-1 or H-1B visa is prohibited from moonlighting.

2.1.4 **Home call (pager call):** Call taken from outside the assigned Institution. This call is not subject to the every third night limitation. If the House Officer is called into the hospital from home, those duty hours are counted toward the 80-hour limit.

2.1.5 **New patient:** any patient for whom the House Officer has not previously provided care.

#### 2.2 Background

Residency is an essential dimension of the transformation of the medical student to the independent practitioner along the continuum of medical education. It is physically, emotionally, and intellectually demanding, and requires longitudinally-concentrated effort on the part of the resident.

2.2.1 The specialty education of physicians to practice independently is experiential, and necessarily occurs within the context of the health care delivery system.

2.2.2 Developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes leading to proficiency in all the domains of clinical competency requires the resident physician to assume personal responsibility for the care of individual patients.

2.2.3 For the resident, the essential learning activity is interaction with patients under the guidance and supervision of faculty members who give value, context, and meaning to those interactions.

2.2.4 As residents gain experience and demonstrate growth in their ability to care for patients, they assume roles that permit them to exercise those skills with greater independence.

2.2.5 This concept—graded and progressive responsibility—is one of the core tenets of American graduate medical education.

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- 2.2.6. Supervision in the setting of graduate medical education has the goals of assuring the provision of safe and effective care to the individual patient; assuring each resident's development of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to enter the unsupervised practice of medicine; and establishing a foundation for continued professional growth.
- 2.3 Off Service House Officer call schedules and duty assignments will be constructed in a manner for the Off Service House Officer to ensure that there is strict adherence to ACGME guidelines.
- 2.3.1. The Off Service House Officer **MUST** report his/her duty hours to both their primary Program Coordinator and their host Program Coordinator's office on a weekly basis.
- 2.3.2. Non-compliance with duty hour requirements **MUST** expeditiously be reported to both the primary Training Program Director and to the host Program Director to permit corrective actions to be taken.
- 2.4 Georgia Health Sciences University fully supports the Residents Work Hours policy established by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), which sets forth in the following requirements.

### **2.5 Professionalism, Personal Responsibility, and Patient Safety**

Programs and the sponsoring institution must educate residents and faculty members concerning the professional responsibilities of physicians to appear for duty appropriately rested and fit to provide the services required by their patients. The program must be committed to and responsible for promoting patient safety and resident well-being in a supportive educational environment.

- 2.5.1 The program director must ensure that residents are integrated and actively participate in interdisciplinary clinical quality improvement and patient safety programs.
- 2.5.2 The learning objectives of the program must: be accomplished through an appropriate blend of supervised patient care responsibilities, clinical teaching, and didactic educational events; and, not be compromised by excessive reliance on residents to fulfill non-physician service obligations.
- 2.5.3 The program director and institution must ensure a culture of professionalism that supports patient safety and personal responsibility.
- 2.5.4 Residents and faculty members must demonstrate an understanding and acceptance of their personal role in the following:
- assurance of the safety and welfare of patients entrusted to their care;
  - provision of patient- and family-centered care;
  - assurance of their fitness for duty;
  - management of their time before, during, and after clinical assignments;
  - recognition of impairment, including illness and fatigue, in themselves and in their peers;
  - attention to lifelong learning;
  - the monitoring of their patient care performance improvement indicators; and,
  - honest and accurate reporting of duty hours, patient outcomes, and clinical experience data.

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2.5.5 All residents and faculty members must demonstrate responsiveness to patient needs that supersedes self-interest.

2.5.6 Physicians must recognize that under certain circumstances, the best interests of the patient may be served by transitioning that patient's care to another qualified and rested provider.

### 2.6 Duty Hours

2.6.1 Duty hours must be limited to 80 hours per week, averaged over a four week period, inclusive of all in-house call activities and all moonlighting.

#### 2.6.2. Maximum Duty Period Length

- a) Duty periods of PGY-1 residents must not exceed 16 hours in duration.
- b) Duty periods of PGY-2 residents and above may be scheduled to a maximum of 24 hours of continuous duty in the hospital. Programs must encourage residents to use alertness management strategies in the context of patient care responsibilities. Strategic napping, especially after 16 hours of continuous duty and between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., is strongly suggested.
- c) It is essential for patient safety and resident education that effective transitions in care occur. Residents may be allowed to remain on-site in order to accomplish these tasks; however, this period of time must be no longer than an additional four hours.
- d) Residents must not be assigned additional clinical responsibilities after 24 hours of continuous in-house duty.
- e) In unusual circumstances, residents, on their own initiative, may remain beyond their scheduled period of duty to continue to provide care to a single patient. Justifications for such extensions of duty are limited to reasons of required continuity for a severely ill or unstable patient, academic importance of the events transpiring, or humanistic attention to the needs of a patient or family.
- f) Under those circumstances, the resident must:
  - (1) appropriately hand over the care of all other patients to the team responsible for their continuing care and
  - (2) document the reasons for remaining to care for the patient in question and submit documentation in every circumstance to the program director. (See attachment A).
  - (3) The program director must review each submission of additional service, and track both individual resident and program-wide episodes of additional duty.

#### 2.6 .3 Minimum Time Off between Scheduled Duty Periods

- a) PGY-1 residents should have 10 hours, and must have eight hours, free of duty between scheduled duty periods
- b) Intermediate-level residents [as defined by the Review Committee] should have 10 hours free of duty, and must have eight hours between scheduled duty periods. They must have at least 14 hours free of duty after 24 hours of in-house duty.
- c) Residents in the final years of education [as defined by the Review Committee] must be prepared to enter the

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unsupervised practice of medicine and care for patients over irregular or extended periods.

- (1) This preparation must occur within the context of the 80-hour, maximum duty period length, and one-day-off-in seven standards.
  - (2) While it is desirable that residents in their final years of education have eight hours free of duty between scheduled duty periods, there may be circumstances [as defined by the Review Committee] when these residents must stay on duty to care for their patients or return to the hospital with fewer than eight hours free of duty.
- (d) Circumstances of return-to-hospital activities with fewer than eight hours away from the hospital by residents in their final years of education must be monitored by the program director.

#### 2.6.4 At Home Call

- a) Time spent in the hospital by residents on at-home call must count towards the 80-hour maximum weekly hour limit.
- b) The frequency of at-home call is not subject to the every-third-night limitation, but must satisfy the requirement for one-day-in-seven free of duty, when averaged over four weeks.
- c) At-home call must not be so frequent or taxing as to preclude rest or reasonable personal time for each resident.
- d) Residents are permitted to return to the hospital while on at-home call to care for new or established patients. Each episode of this type of care, while it must be included in the 80-hour weekly maximum, will not initiate a new "off-duty period".

#### 2.6.5 Alertness Management/Fatigue Mitigation Program

The program must:

- a) educate all faculty members and residents to recognize the signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation;
- b) educate all faculty members and residents in alertness management and fatigue mitigation processes; and,
- c) adopt fatigue mitigation processes to manage the potential negative effects of fatigue on patient care and learning, such as naps or back-up call schedules.
- d) Each program must have a process to ensure continuity of patient care in the event that a resident may be unable to perform his/her patient care duties.
- e) The sponsoring institution must provide adequate sleep facilities and/or safe transportation options for residents who may be too fatigued to safely return home (See Attachment B).

#### 2.7 Supervision of House Officers

2.7.1 All patient care must be supervised by qualified faculty. The Program Director must ensure, direct and document adequate supervision of House Officers at all times. House Officers must be provided with rapid, reliable systems for communicating with supervising faculty.

2.7.2 Faculty schedules must be structured to provide House Officers with continuous supervision and consultation.

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The program must be committed to and responsible for promoting patient safety and resident well-being in a supportive educational environment, and must ensure that residents are integrated and actively participate in interdisciplinary clinical quality improvement and patient safety programs.

2.7.3 The learning objectives of the program must:

a) be accomplished through an appropriate blend of supervised patient care responsibilities, clinical teaching and didactic educational events; and

b) not be compromised by excessive reliance on residents to fulfill non-physician service obligations.

2.7.4 The program director and institution must ensure a culture of professionalism that supports patient safety and personal responsibility. Residents and faculty members must demonstrate an understanding and acceptance of their personal role in the following:

a) assurance of the safety and welfare of patients entrusted to their care

b) provision of patient-and family-centered care;

c) assurance of their fitness for duty;

d) management of their time before, during and after clinical assignments;

e) recognition of impairment, including illness and fatigue, in themselves and their peers;

f) attention to lifelong learning;

g) the monitoring of their patient care performance improvement indicators and;

h) honest and accurate reporting of duty hours, patient outcomes and clinical experience data.

2.7.5 In the clinical learning environment, each patient must have an identifiable, appropriately-credentialed and privileged attending physician (or licensed independent practitioner as approved by each Review Committee) who is ultimately responsible for that patient's care.

a) This information should be available to residents, faculty members, and patients.

b) Residents and faculty members should inform patients of their respective roles in each patient's care.

2.7.6 The program must demonstrate that the appropriate level of supervision is in place for all residents who care for patients.

2.7.7 Supervision may be exercised through a variety of methods. Some activities require the physical presence of the supervising faculty member.

2.7.8 For many aspects of patient care, the supervising physician may be a more advanced resident or fellow. Other portions of care provided by the resident can be adequately supervised by the immediate availability of the supervising faculty member or resident physician, either in the institution, or by means of telephonic and/or electronic modalities.

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- 2.7.9 In some circumstances, supervision may include post-hoc review of resident delivered care with feedback as to the appropriateness of that care.
- 2.8.0 Levels of Supervision
- 2.8.1 To ensure oversight of resident supervision and graded authority and responsibility, the program must use the following classification of supervision:
- a) Direct Supervision – the supervising physician is physically present with the resident and patient.
  - b) Indirect Supervision:
    - (1) with direct supervision immediately available – the supervising physician is physically within the hospital or other site of patient care, and is immediately available to provide Direct Supervision.
    - (2) with direct supervision available – the supervising physician is not physically present within the hospital or other site of patient care, but is immediately available by means of telephonic and/or electronic modalities, and is available to provide direct supervision
  - c) Oversight – The supervising physician is available to provide review of procedures/encounters with feedback provided after care is delivered.
- 2.8.1 the privilege of progressive authority and responsibility, conditional independence, and a supervisory role in patient care delegated to each resident must be assigned by the program director and faculty members.
- a) The program director must evaluate each resident’s abilities based on specific criteria. When available, evaluation should be guided by specific national standards-based criteria.
  - b) Faculty members functioning as supervising physicians should delegate portions of care to residents, based on the needs of the patient and the skills of the residents.
  - c) Senior residents or fellows should serve in a supervisory role of junior residents in recognition of their progress toward independence, based on the needs of each patient and the skills of the individual resident or fellow.
- 2.8.2 . Programs must set guidelines for circumstances and events in which residents must communicate with appropriate supervising faculty members, such as the transfer of a patient to an intensive care unit, or end-of-life decisions.
- a) Each resident must know the limits of his/her scope of authority, and the circumstances under which he/she is permitted to act with conditional independence.
    - (1) In particular, PGY-1 residents should be supervised either directly or indirectly with direct supervision immediately Available. [Each Review Committee will describe the achieved competencies under which PGY-1 residents progress to be supervised indirectly, with direct supervision available.]
- 2.8.3 Faculty supervision assignments should be of sufficient duration to assess the knowledge and skills of each resident and delegate to him/her the appropriate level of patient care authority and responsibility.
- 2.9.0 Clinical Responsibilities

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The clinical responsibilities for each resident must be based on PGY-level, patient safety, resident education, severity and complexity of patient illness/condition and available support services.[Optimal clinical workload will be further specified by each Review Committee.]

### 3.0 Transitions of Care

- 3.0.1 Programs must design clinical assignments to minimize the number of transitions in patient care.
- 3.0.2 Sponsoring institutions and programs must ensure and monitor effective, structured hand-over processes to facilitate both continuity of care and patient safety.
- 3.0.3 Programs must ensure that residents are competent in communicating with team members in the hand-over process.
- 3.0.4 The sponsoring institution must ensure the availability of schedules that inform all members of the health care team of attending physicians and residents currently responsible for each patient's care.

### 3.1 Work Environment:

- 3.1.1 **Food services:** House Officers on duty must have access to adequate and appropriate food services. Food is provided to House Officers who take-in-house call.
- 3.1.2 **Call rooms:** Call rooms are provided for House Officers who take in-house call.
- 3.1.3 **Support services:** Adequate ancillary support for patient care shall be provided for House Officers at all times.
- 3.1.4 **Laboratory/pathology/radiology services:** these services and the associated information systems must be available and adequate to support timely and quality patient care.
- 3.1.5 **Medical Records:** Medical records system that document the course of each patient's illness and care must be available at all times and must be adequate to support quality patient care, the education of the House Officer, quality assurance and provide a resource for scholarly activity.
- 3.1.6 **Security/safety:** Appropriate security and personal safety measures must be provided to House Officers at all training locations.

### 3.2 Teamwork

- 3.2.1 Residents must care for patients in an environment that maximizes effective communication. This must include the opportunity to work as a member of effective interprofessional teams that are appropriate to the delivery of care in the specialty.
- 3.3.2 [Each Review Committee will define the elements that must be present in each specialty.]

### 3.4 Oversight:

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- 3.4.1. Each ACGME- Accredited Residency and Fellowship Training Program must establish formal written policies governing Resident duty hours that are consistent with the Institutional and Program Requirements. This policy will be communicated to the House Officer and faculty annually.
- 3.4.2. The GME Office must be provided with a copy of the policy on a yearly basis. These formal policies will apply to all participating Institutions where House Officers are trained.
- 3.4.3. Duty hours must be monitored by each Program and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Medical Education Office who will monitor duty hours at monthly, quarterly and/or random intervals. Each Program Director should review each House Officers rotation schedule to assure compliance with this Institutional policy and the Common Program Requirements.
- 3.4.4. Each Program Director should regularly monitor House Officers duty hours for compliance with this Institutional policy and the Common Program Requirements. Monitoring of duty hours is required with frequency sufficient to ensure an appropriate balance between education and service.
- 3.4.5. The GMEC shall monitor compliance with this policy through the:
  - a. Internal Residency Review process for each program
  - b. Annual GME reports of each program
  - c. Periodic monitoring of individual programs
- 3.4.6. Falsification of duty hours data or pressure to cause the falsification of such data is considered egregious behavior for House Officers and can result in disciplinary action to include dismissal. Faculty members are governed by the rules of the Faculty Senate and policies and procedures of Georgia Health Sciences University.
- 3.4.7. House Officers must notify their Program Director of requests or pressure to work in excess of duty hours authorized by this policy.

### 3.5 Maximum Frequency of In-House Night Float

- 3.5.1. Residents must not be scheduled for more than six consecutive nights of night float.
- 3.5.2. [The maximum number of consecutive weeks of night float, and maximum number of months of night float per year may be further specified by the Review Committee.]
- 3.5.3. Maximum In-House On-Call Frequency

PGY-2 residents and above must be scheduled for in-house call no more frequently than every-third-night (when averaged over a four-week period).

### 3.6 Duty Hours Exceptions

- 3.6.1. An RRC may grant exceptions for up to 10 % of the 80-hour limit, to individual Programs based on a sound educational rationale. **The GMEC must review and formally endorse the exemption prior to submission to the RRC** according to the following procedures:
  - a) The Program Director must submit a written request for an exemption to the GMEC Chair. The request must clearly document the following:

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## Attachment A

**SUBJECT: Residents Remaining Beyond Their Scheduled Tour of duty**

### Protocol and Documentation Form

1. Residents under unusual circumstances, residents, on their own initiative, may remain beyond their scheduled period of duty to continue to provide care to a single patient.
2. Justifications for such extensions of duty are limited to reasons:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_required continuity for a severely ill or unstable patient
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_academic importance of the events transpiring
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_humanistic attention to the needs of a patient or family
3. Under those circumstances, the resident must:
  - (1) appropriately hand over the care of all other patients to the team responsible for their continuing care
  - (2) document the reasons for remaining to care for the patient in question
  - (3) submit that documentation in every circumstance to the program director.
4. This completed document must be provided to the program director and program coordinator after each episode of an extended period of duty.
5. The additional time will be entered by the resident into the one45 electronic residency software duty hours tracking program.
6. The program director must review each submission of additional service, and track both individual resident and program-wide episodes of additional duty.

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## **Attachment B** **SLEEP FACILITIES AND/OR SAFE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS**

Residents who feel they are too fatigued to safely drive home should contact the designated person below at the hospital the resident is working. Sleep facilities and/or safe transportation options will be provided by each hospital. Taxi fare will be reimbursed through the Graduate Medical Education Department to cover expenses for transportation to home and for return to the hospital.

MCG Health Medical Center  
Lynette M. Brege  
Graduate Medical Education  
AE 3042  
(706) 721-3052  
[lynette@georgiahealth.edu](mailto:lynette@georgiahealth.edu)

Children's Medical Center  
Lynette M. Brege  
Graduate Medical Education  
AE 3042  
(706) 721-3052  
[lynette@georgiahealth.edu](mailto:lynette@georgiahealth.edu)

Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center  
Walter J. Moore, M.D.  
Graduate Medical Education  
AE 3042  
Pager (706) 721-7243 Pager 8888  
[wmoore@georgiahealth.edu](mailto:wmoore@georgiahealth.edu)

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