

**POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION**  
**Policy on Resident Leaves of Absence and Waivers of Training**

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**1. Preamble:**

It is recognized that circumstances may arise that require a Resident Physician to be absent from training. In this instance, the Resident may request a Leave of Absence for a specified period of time, and in accordance with the provisions of the Resident Physician Agreement.

**2. Principles:**

A Leave of Absence may be required for a variety of personal and/or professional reasons. Requests will be addressed in a respectful and confidential manner with the well-being of the resident as highest priority.

Residents are registrants of the medical regulatory authority, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA). Residents have a professional responsibility to withdraw from patient care when they are impaired due to health issues, emotional disturbance, cognitive concerns, or addiction to alcohol or drugs. Health practitioners

are required to notify the CPSA regarding a health concern or impairment that may constitute a risk to patients or the public.

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to all Residents in all Residency Training Programs.

### **4. Definitions**

- “Alberta Health Services” (AHS) means the health authority for Alberta that delivers medical care on behalf of the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Health
- “Associate Dean” means Associate Dean of Postgraduate Medical Education in the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary. The Associate Dean is the Faculty member responsible for the overall conduct and supervision of PGME within the faculty.
- “CFPC” means the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the body responsible for accreditation, examination and Resident certification for CFPC programs.
- “CPSA means the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, the provincial regulatory authority responsible for the registration, regulation, and discipline of physicians in Alberta, Canada
- “Medical Affairs” means the office within Alberta Health Services AHS responsible for professional credentials verification, clinical access provisioning, and administering the human resources transactions (including payroll) of the Resident Physicians’ Agreement.
- “Program Director” means the person responsible for the overall conduct of a PGME Program in a discipline, and is responsible to the Associate Dean.
- “Residency Training Program” means a RCPSC or CFPC accredited postgraduate medical education-training program in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary.
- “Resident” means a physician registered in a PGME training Program administered by the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary and leads to RCPSC or CFPC certification.
- “PARA” means the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta, the non-profit association that provides representation for physicians completing further training in a residency program

- “PGME Training Program” means any of CSM’s clinical and non-clinical programs of study that require a Resident to be registered in the RCPSC or CFPC accredited training programs and which require the Resident to complete a Placement, and may require an Instructor to participate in the Placement.
  - “Resident Physician Agreement” means the Agreement between the Governors of the Universities of Calgary, University of Alberta, Alberta Health Services and the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta. The Agreement describes the terms and conditions applicable to Resident Physicians related to the provision of health care services within a learning environment.
  - “Rotation” means a required element of training and may consist of one or more four (4) week blocks, as determined by the Program as a required element of training and may consist of one or more four (4) week blocks.
- “RCPSC” means the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the body responsible for accreditation, examination and Resident certification for RCPSC programs.

## 5. Policy

5.1 Circumstances that qualify residents for leaves of absence are defined in the Resident Physician Agreement and include:

- Maternity/Paternity
- Adoption
- Parental Leave
- Sick Leave
- Special Leave
- Compassionate Leave
- Bereavement Leave
- Exam Leave
- Study Leave
- Educational Leave
- Unpaid General Leave
- Medical (sick) leave
- Others at the discretion of the Associate Dean, PGME.

5.2 Leaves of absence will not be granted for the purpose of earning income. Salary continuation during the leave is determined by the Resident Physician Agreement and subject to approval of Alberta Health Services.

5.3 On the recommendation of the Program Director, the Associate

Dean PGME may grant leaves of absence with the understanding that the promotion/graduation date will move forward by an amount of time equal to the leave.

- 5.4 Programs must track absences and report any Leave of Absence to PGME. Notification to PGME must be accompanied by an approval request and identification of the revised promotion/graduation date.
- 5.5 PGME will notify the AHS Medical Affairs of all Leaves of Absence
- 5.6 Residents on leave must maintain an appointment with the University of Calgary and PGME. A resident on leave will:
  - a) sign and return a Letter of Engagement as per usual for any residents registered with PGME
  - b) continue to be registered with the residency program and will therefore be expected to maintain a code of conduct consistent with standards of the residency program, the University of Calgary and the medical profession.
- 5.7 A Resident Physician who has been approved for a leave of absence must return to residency on the approved return date. If this is not possible the resident must contact the appropriate Program Director to apply for an extension of the leave of absence.
- 5.8 When a resident is granted a leave of absence due to health and/or psychological conditions, the resident should receive appropriate care and support. Such residents should not return to work until determined to be fit for the discipline-specific roles and responsibilities of a resident physician. This determination is made by a qualified health care provider.
- 5.9 A resident returning from a Leave of Absence may require an accommodated learning/work plan. In this case, the resident should follow the process detailed in the *Postgraduate Medical Learner Accommodation Process*  
<https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/6/policies/pgme-resident-accommodation-policy-final-june20-v1.pdf>
- 5.10 For Leaves of Absence greater than a single block, and to ensure patient safety and optimum learning, the Program will

determine whether the Resident requires a transition period to assess competence to resume clinical duties. The Program Director will meet with the Resident to discuss and document details of the transition period, including duration, objectives, and curriculum. The PGME Director of Learner Resources may be engaged in this discussion at the discretion of the Program. Evaluation of performance during the transition period is formative in nature without impact on overall standing in the program. The transition period is not counted as a regular rotation to meet the requirements of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (“RCPSC”) or the College of Family Physicians of Canada (“CFPC”).

5.11 While a Resident will normally return to training at the same level as when leave was taken, the Program Director (in discussion with the Resident) shall determine:

- a) the training level to which the resident will return following a leave
- b) the educational experiences remaining for completion of requirements, learning objectives and competences of the training program

Any adjustment to the training level must be reviewed and approved by the Residency Training Committee and the Associate Dean, PGME.

5.12 The Program will notify the PGME Office when a Resident is scheduled to return to training, and will advise of any Transition Period or Accommodations to be provided. The PGME Office will notify AHS Medical Affairs of the return date and of any academic accommodations that may have an impact in the clinical setting

5.13 If the Program has received no communication from the Resident Physician within thirty (30) days of the return date, the Associate Dean may attempt to contact the Resident Physician either by phone, email or registered letter where possible.

5.14 A Resident who is absent and has not contacted the Program Director to arrange time off or a leave of absence will be considered absent without leave. Programs must immediately report Residents who are absent without leave to the PGME Office who will notify the MEO to ensure appropriate steps,

including payroll adjustments, are taken.

- 5.15 A waiver of training after a leave of absence is considered the exception rather than standard procedure. Therefore, programs and residents must not assume that a waiver will be approved, and should plan the final year of training and graduation date accordingly.
- 5.16 For Residents in traditional (time-based) training programs, waivers of training will be considered in accordance with current policy of the appropriate certification college -- either the RCPS or CFPC
- 5.17 For Residents in Competency Based Training Programs where there has been a cumulative leave of absence >2 weeks for each training year (i.e. > 4 weeks for a 2 year program, > 10 weeks for a 5 year program) the Program must select one of the following options:
- a) extension of training by a period of time as determined appropriate by the program OR
  - b) a waiver of training in cases where the resident has satisfactorily completed all program requirements and competencies
- 5.18 A waiver of training will be considered by the Associate Dean PGME only under the following circumstances:
- Compliance with the Waiver of Training after a Leave of Absence from Residency policies of The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and The College of Family Physicians of Canada;
  - For a resident in the final year of training: Traditional stream (time based) residents who have already taken certification examinations are not eligible for a waiver. CBD residents may be eligible after certification examinations if permitted by the RCPSC.
  - The waiver requested does not exceed the maximum allowable;
  - The resident will have completed all mandatory components of training;
  - The resident's performance meets the requirements defined by the Cumming School of Medicine PGME Committee as follows:
  - Satisfactory and better performance (according to

recent ITERs and other assessments) in all competencies; and the Associate Dean PGME is assured by the Residency Program Committee of their confidence that the resident will meet all requirements by end of training if the waiver is granted.

- 5.19 The length of training time waived must not exceed leave time taken by the resident

Approved by PGME Committee - April 18, 2008  
Revised June 2020  
Approved by PGME Committee – August 20, 2020