

Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University

House Staff Policies and Procedures

Policy

HS 1.0 Substance Abuse and For Cause Testing

Source

Graduate Medical Education Office

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Purpose

To provide guidelines regarding assessment and course of action when substance abuse, dependence, or impairment of House Staff in Graduate Medical Education (GME) at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University (AU) is suspected.

1.0 Policy Statements

- 1.1 MCG is committed to the medical education and treatment of House Staff who enter treatment for chemical dependence. However, patient safety must take priority.
- 1.2 Nothing in this policy shall prevent Program Directors from taking disciplinary action against House Staff, where appropriate. However, House Staff are afforded Due Process. See GME HS Policy 13.0.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Substance Use Disorder shall mean:

A cluster of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues using the substance despite significant substance-related problems (DSM-V-TR)

2.2 Substance Intoxication shall mean:

Substance intoxication involves disturbances of perception, wakefulness, attention, thinking, judgment, psychomotor behavior, and interpersonal behavior attributed to a substance used (DSM-V-TR)

2.3 Unspecified Substance-Related Disorder shall mean:

The presentation of symptoms related to substances that cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning but do not meet the full criteria for any specific disorders in the substance-related and addictive disorders diagnostic class (DSM-V-TR)

2.4 Impairment shall mean:

The inability to practice medicine and related GME training activities with reasonable skill and safety as a result of illness, such as those listed above, or injury as defined in The American Psychiatric Association's (APA) document on fitness-for-duty evaluations

2.5 For purposes of this policy, substance abuse can include:

The use or possession of any drug in a manner prohibited by law; and/or  
The use of alcohol, any drug, or other substance in such a way that the user's performance as a healthcare provider is impaired

2.6 House Staff shall mean:

A generic term used to include interns, residents, and fellows in GME Training Programs

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#### HS 1.0 Chemical/Substance Abuse

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#### Graduate Medical Education Office

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#### 3.0 Procedures

- 3.1 The Department Chairperson and/or Program Director along with Faculty, Staff, and peers will be responsible for identifying House Staff, as well as other colleagues, that may be suffering from untreated or relapsing substance abuse.
- 3.2 A House Staff suspected of suffering from active substance abuse may be immediately placed on leave of absence at discretion of the Program Director and referred for appropriate treatment as needed. If there is a patient safety concern, House Staff must be placed on leave of absence and/or removed from patient care duties. Please see GME HS Policy 7.0. GME Office and the Designated Institutional Official (DIO) must be informed. The DIO will assist the Program in contacting the Employee-Faculty Assistance Program or other resources if appropriate.
- 3.3 If impairment is suspected, the DIO, Program Director or designee, or acting supervisor (e.g., site director, current attending faculty member, etc.) should refer the House Staff to Employee Health for drug testing sample collection during regular business hours or the Emergency Department after business hours in accordance with the AU Substance Abuse policy. The Program Director and DIO should be notified as soon as possible if not involved in the referral due to urgency.  
<https://www.augusta.edu/compliance/policyinfo/policy/substance-abuse-policy.pdf>

**The procedure for “For Cause Testing” of House Staff is as follows:**

- 3.2.1 “GME For Cause Testing Authorization” must be completed by the DIO, Program Director or their designee, or active supervisor (for instances when the DIO and Program Director are not available). This form is available in the GME office, GME website, and has been provided to Program Directors.
- 3.2.2 House Staff must be escorted to the sample collection site by their Program Director or another Program representative designated by the Program Director, DIO, or acting supervisor. The House Staff member must not drive themselves to the sample collection site.
- 3.2.3 If after regular business hours, the Emergency Department charge nurse will be notified by the Program designee that For Cause Testing is needed.
- 3.2.4 The test shall screen for drugs whose use is either illegal or prone to abuse, as determined at the discretion of the DIO, Program Director or their designee, or acting supervisor with consultation as needed by the Director of the Clinical Pathology Laboratory or the State contract laboratory (if applicable).
- 3.2.5 The results of a House Staff’s For Cause drug test shall be communicated to the Program Director and DIO after consent is obtained by the House Staff.
- 3.2.6 The results of the test and other circumstances may result in remediation, probation, non-promotion, suspension, non-renewal, and/or dismissal. The Program Director is vested with the authority to determine these disciplinary actions once House Staff training period has begun. House Staff will be afforded Due Process under GME HS Policy 13.0. MCG reserves the right to independently evaluate each individual to determine if that person is ready for re-integration.
- 3.2.7 House Staff are considered “high-risk positions” and must complete pre-employment drug testing. Preemployment drug testing failure will result in immediate withdrawal of training offer by the DIO.
- 3.3 Department Chairpersons and/or Program Directors are strongly encouraged to consult the Employee-Faculty Assistance Program for guidance in determining possible symptoms of chemical dependence and/or substance abuse as they relate to performance impairment. The Employee-Faculty Assistance Program can also assist in the identification of appropriate treatment resources.
- 3.4 If applicable, written reports on treatment progress must be provided to the Program Director by the treating facility/provider. If the House Staff is on remediation or probation during this time, applicable policies must be followed to include GME HS Policy 18.0.
- 3.5 Re-integration into the Training Program will be at the discretion of the Program Director after consultation with the Department Chairperson, the DIO, and appropriate chemical dependence professionals. MCG

reserves the right to independently evaluate each individual to determine if that person is ready for re-integration.


- 3.6 Although AU is committed to appropriate assistance for House Staff with substance abuse, untreated or relapsing dependence is judged to be incompatible with safe clinical performance. Dismissal or non-renewal through Due Process will result if a House Staff fails to comply with a rehabilitation program or meet goals as outlined by the Program Director. Please see GME HS Policy 3.0 and GME HS Policy 13.0. House Staff may also receive adverse actions by professional licensing boards and other consequences by state and other applicable laws.

#### 4.0 Confidentiality


- 4.1 When a House Staff seeks treatment for chemical dependence/substance abuse, every effort will be made by the Institution to protect the confidentiality of such matters. House Staff who come forward voluntarily will be given assistance consistent with state law.

#### 5.0 Additional Reporting Responsibilities

- 5.1 If a House Staff is arrested, charged with, plead to, or is convicted of an offense including a drug offense or DUI, they must notify their Program and complete AU disclosure form and submit to Human Resources within 72 hours of the incident.  
<https://www.augusta.edu/hr/relations/university-employee-relations/documents/arrestdisclosureform.pdf>
- 5.2 The Program Director who becomes aware of substance abuse/impairment with a House Staff must take appropriate action to correct the situation. All Faculty, Staff, and/or House Staff that are aware of the substance abuse/impairment problems in a House Staff are under obligation to report this House Staff to the appropriate Department Chairperson, Program Director, or GME Office.

  
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David Hess, M.D.  
Dean, Medical College of Georgia

05/22/24  
Date

  
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05/22/24  
Date

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