

Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University

House Staff Policies and Procedures

Policy

Source

HS 34.0 House Staff and Faculty Well-Being

Graduate Medical Education Office

1.0 Purpose

This policy outlines the responsibility of the Office of Graduate Medical Education (GME) at the Medical College of Georgia (MCG), individual GME training programs, and Faculty and House Staff to address Faculty and House Staff well-being.

2.0 Policy Statement

In the current health care environment, House Staff and Faculty members are at increased risk for burnout and depression compared to the general population. Psychological and physical well-being are critical to the development and maintenance of the competent, caring, and resilient physician.

Self-care is an important component of professionalism and high-quality patient care; it is also a skill that must be learned and nurtured in the context of other aspects of GME training.

3.0 Procedure

The following responsibilities are defined for the GME Office, individual GME training programs, and Faculty and House Staff.

3.1 MCG GME must oversee MCG GME programs' fulfillment of responsibility to address well-being of House Staff and Faculty, consistent with the ACGME Common and specialty-/subspecialty-specific Program Requirements, addressing areas of non-compliance in a timely manner. This includes:

3.1.1 Assisting program directors (PD) in their initiatives to protect House Staff time with patients, minimize non-physician obligations, provide administrative support to trainees, promote progressive autonomy, and enhance professional relationships;

3.1.2 Providing programs with resources to educate Faculty and House Staff about the symptoms of burnout, depression, and substance use and their avoidance; this will be accomplished, in part, through annual Interdisciplinary Resident/Fellow Core curriculum sessions;

3.1.3 Identifying resources for House Staff and Faculty burnout, depression, and substance use; referring Faculty, as appropriate, to other stakeholders that can identify these resources for Faculty;

3.1.4 Educating House Staff and Faculty members to alert designated personnel when they are concerned about themselves or a colleague who is displaying signs of burnout, depression, substance use, suicidal ideation, potential for violence, or who is not proactively engaging in self-care; this will be accomplished, in part, through annual Interdisciplinary Resident/Fellow Core curriculum sessions;

3.1.5. Providing programs with resources to educate Faculty and House Staff about the recognition of the signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation, alertness management, and fatigue mitigation processes; this will be accomplished, in part, through annual Interdisciplinary Resident/Fellow Core curriculum sessions;

3.1.6 Providing access to appropriate tools for self-screening (see Mayo Well-being Index below) and provide access to confidential, affordable, mental health assessment including access to urgent and emergent care 24 hours a day, seven days a week; this will be accomplished, in part, through the Employee Faculty Assistance Program and local 24/7 Emergency Departments and national Helplines (see resources below);

3.1.7 Helping ensure that programs have sufficient back-up plans to provide patient care in the event that House Staff is unable to perform their patient care responsibilities due to fatigue or other cause;

3.1.8 Providing a way for Faculty and House Staff to report unprofessional behavior and other concerns/feedback via a respectful process that allows for anonymity that includes reporting, investigating, and addressing such concerns that minimizes conflict of interest; see MCG GME HS Policies 12.0 and 39.0 and House Staff resource page at <https://www.augusta.edu/mcg/residents/housestaffresources.php>;

3.1.9 MCG GME will also ensure a healthy and safe clinical and educational environment that provides for: access to food during clinical and educational assignments; sleep/rest facilities that are safe, quiet, clean, and

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private, and that are available and accessible for House Staff, with proximity appropriate for safe patient care; safe transportation options for House Staff who may be too fatigued to safely return home on their own; clean and private facilities for lactation with proximity appropriate for safe patient care, and clean and safe refrigeration resources for the storage of breast milk; safety and security measures appropriate to the clinical learning environment site; and, accommodations for House Staff with disabilities, consistent with MCG's policy.

4.1 Program Responsibilities: In addition to working with the Institution on the initiatives described above, Programs are responsible for:

4.1.1 Paying attention to House Staff schedules to evaluate and correct for work intensity and compression factors;

4.1.2 Evaluating workplace safety data and addressing the safety of House Staff and Faculty;

4.1.3 Developing program-specific policies and/or programs that encourage optimal House Staff and Faculty well-being;

4.1.4 Allowing House Staff to attend medical, dental, and mental health care appointments, including those scheduled during work hours;

4.1.5 Educating House Staff and Faculty about burnout, depression, and substance use, and their avoidance;

4.1.6 Teaching and nurturing self-care practices, an important component of professionalism and high-quality patient care;

4.1.7 Providing a respectful, professional, and civil environment that is free from mistreatment, abuse, coercion, or retaliation; there should be education in place about professional behavior and a confidential process for reporting concerns (see MCG GME HS Policies 12.0 and 39.0);

4.1.8. Developing policies and procedures to ensure coverage of patient care and ensure continuity of patient care when there are circumstances in which House Staff may be unable to attend work, including but not limited to fatigue, illness, family emergencies, and medical, parental, or caregiver leave; allowing an appropriate length of absence for House Staff unable to perform their patient care responsibilities; these policies will be implemented without fear of negative consequences for the House Staff who is or was unable to provide the clinical work (see GME HS Policies 4.0 and 7.0);

4.1.9. Educating all House Staff and Faculty in recognition of the signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation, alertness management, and fatigue mitigation processes.

5.1 Faculty and House Staff Responsibilities:

5.1.1 Learning self-care is an important component of professionalism and patient care; understanding that Faculty and House Staff have a responsibility to themselves and to their patients and programs to ensure that they are fit for work (see MCG GME HS Policies 1.0 and 35.0);

5.1.2 Adopting behaviors that are proactive in support of self-care, and modeling of healthy lifestyles and behaviors for patients, students, and colleagues;

5.1.3 Time management and implementing fatigue mitigation strategies including activities surrounding clinical assignments;

5.1.4 Impairment recognition and notification, either from illness including mental health, fatigue, or substance abuse, in themselves, their peers, or other members of the health care team;

5.1.5 Adoption of lifelong learning skills including being receptive to feedback with active modification of practices as applicable;

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5.1.6 Acquisition of performance improvement and quality patient care precepts in their application to healthcare delivery;

5.1.7 Reporting patient outcomes and evaluations (Faculty, House Staff, multisource, rotation, program, etc.) in a timely and accurate manner;

5.1.8 Following MCG GME Policies as applicable including GME Grievance/Conflict Resolution Policy (MCG GME HS Policy 39.0);

5.1.9 For House Staff - Reporting clinical and education work hours and clinical experience (such as case logs/procedures) in a timely and accurate manner.



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

03/13/24
Date



Natasha M. Savage M.D.
Senior Associate Dean, Graduate Medical Education and
DIO

03/13/24
Date

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Resources:

Employee-Faculty Assistance Program

<https://www.augusta.edu/hr/employee-relations/efap.php>

Offers free counseling for all concerns, except substance abuse. However, referral recommendations for substance abuse can be provided.

University System of Georgia (USG) Well-being

<https://www.usg.edu/well-being/>

<https://usg.mylifeexpert.com/>

Services are convenient, confidential, and frequently free.

Find an array of work-life services including:

- **Counseling Services:** Phone support for crises and emergencies as well as in-person counseling sessions.
- **Family Caregiving:** Resources and referrals for dependent care-related services, in addition to emergency back-up childcare and eldercare.
- **Convenience Services:** Assistance in locating household and daily living resources, including pet care services, home repairs, travel planning, and event scheduling.
- **Legal and Financial Services:** Consultation with a Certified Financial Planner and/or attorney.
- **Online Resources:** A wealth of on-demand resources, including articles, self-assessments, resources, and training on a wide range of topics, such as addiction, grief, anxiety, and parenting.

MCG Office of Learner Well-being

<https://www.augusta.edu/mcg/academic-affairs/wellness/>

Mayo Well-being Index

<https://www.mylifeexpert.com/>