

Policy 3.500 Graduate Medical Education Committee
Section Resident/Fellow Supervision/Work Environment
Subject Religious Accommodation
Policy Requirements ACGME Institutional: IV.J ACGME Common: VI
Version History Date developed: 1/2005 Revisions Approved: 10/2007, 7/2010, 5/2014, 10/2019, 1/2021, GMEC Date Legal Review: 3/2021

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to address requests by residents/fellows for accommodation for religious beliefs or practices and to ensure that patient care, educational activities and Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) work hour standards are not compromised and that the equitable treatment of residents/fellows is assured.

Policy

Upon request, residency/fellowship training programs may extend a reasonable accommodation to the resident/fellow, or allow a voluntary work hours “swap” between residents/fellows, provided that the accommodation will not result in an undue hardship on the conduct of the program’s business, a compromise to educational activities, an inequity to other residents/fellows, or problems with ACGME work hour standards.

Procedure

1. The following procedure must be followed by each resident/fellow requesting an accommodation.
 - a. The resident/fellow must make a request in writing for a specified reasonable accommodation based on his/her religious beliefs or practices.
 - b. If the accommodation is approved by the Program Director, the resident/fellow and Program Director must sign a letter of agreement, which includes:
 1. The nature and a description of the accommodation; and,
 2. A statement that the resident/fellow is responsible for completing all requirements of the training program, and that it may not be possible to repeat certain didactic or clinical training lost due to the accommodation.

2. The following procedure must be followed by each Program Director upon receipt of a written request for religious accommodation:
 - a. The Program Director will review the request in a timely manner to determine whether the accommodation can be made.

- b. If the Program Director determines that accommodation request will be granted, the Program Director will prepare and sign a letter of agreement as stated above in 1.b.
 - c. If the Program Director determines that accommodation is not possible, he/she may authorize a voluntary work hours “swap” between similarly qualified residents/fellows. This work hours “swap” must be voluntary by all parties, and must not interfere with the educational activities of the program or the individual residents/fellows.
 - d. If the Program Director determines that accommodation or a work hours “swap” cannot be granted, the Program Director will notify the resident/fellow of this determination in writing in a timely manner.
 - e. To assist residents/fellows in determining in advance what accommodations might be possible in a specific program, Program Directors may, at their discretion, publish guidelines applicable to their program.
3. Any accommodation agreement between a resident/fellow and his/her Program Director shall apply only to the resident/fellow’s home program. The agreement shall not apply to rotations to other programs, unless a formal written agreement to honor religious accommodation requests has been executed between the programs and has been approved by the Graduate Medical Education Executive Committee. Programs may decline to offer accommodation to residents/fellows that are not part of the home program for the same reasons that they would decline accommodation to their own residents/fellows.
4. In the event of an appeal of a Program Director’s decision to decline accommodation to a resident/fellow, the resident/fellow may proceed as described in GME Policy 1.410, Adjudication of Resident Grievances, <https://medicine.uams.edu/gme/gme-community/gmec/gmec-policies/>.