

RESIDENT DUTY HOURS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

PURPOSE:

This policy is designed to establish an institutional policy to ensure an appropriate work environment for all residents of The George Washington University Medical Center and to assist program directors in the development of their individual program policy governing working environment and duty hours.

DEFINITIONS:

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 duty site.
2. In-house call: those duty hours beyond the normal workday when residents are required to be immediately available in the assigned institution.
3. One day: one continuous twenty-four (24) hour period.
4. New patient: any patient for whom the resident has not previously provided care.
5. At home call (pager call): call taken from outside the assigned institution.

POLICY:

1. Each residency program must have written policies governing resident duty hours and working environment that are optimal for both resident education and the care of patients.
2. Program policies must be approved by the GME Committee and distributed to residents and faculty.
3. The educational goals of the program and learning objectives of residents must not be compromised by excessive reliance on residents to fulfill service obligations. Monitoring of duty hours is required with frequency sufficient to ensure an appropriate balance between education and service. Didactic and clinical education must have priority in the allotment of residents' time and energies.
4. The program must provide services and develop systems to minimize the work of residents that is extraneous to their educational programs.
5. Program policies must apply to all participating institutions used by the residents.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Duty hours must be limited to eighty (80) hours per week, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of all in-house call activities. When residents are called into the hospital from home, the hours residents spend in-house are counted toward the eighty (80) hour limit.
2. Residents must be provided with one (1) day in seven (7) free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of in-house and at-home call.
3. A ten (10) hour time period for rest and personal activities must be provided

between all daily duty periods, and after in-house call.

4. In-house call must occur no more frequently than every third night, averaged over a four-week period.
5. Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, must not exceed twenty-four (24) consecutive hours. Residents may remain on duty for up to six (6) additional hours to participate in didactic activities, maintain continuity of medical and surgical care, or conduct outpatient continuity clinics.
6. No new patients may be accepted after twenty-four (24) hours of continuous duty except in outpatient continuity clinics.
7. In certain programs, such as emergency medicine and anesthesiology, where program requirements are more rigorous than institutional requirements, the more restrictive limits will apply.

OVERSIGHT:

The responsibility for ensuring that the working environment and duty hours are appropriate and in compliance with institutional and program requirements is determined by the GMEC through:

1. Review of programs' policies on duty hours and resident working environment
2. Monitoring of duty hours and call schedules for all programs
3. The GMEC internal review process

REQUESTS FOR INCREASES/CHANGES IN RESIDENT DUTY HOURS:

Requests for endorsement of exceptions to the weekly limit on duty hours must be made to the GME Committee before said request is submitted to the Residency Review Committee (RRC). The sole intent for such increase must be to improve residents' educational experience.

1. The program director must submit his request in writing to the GME Committee.
2. The program must be in compliance with institutional and program requirements at all sites to apply for an exception to the weekly limit on duty hours.
3. The program director must be specific in requesting the exception regarding level of residents, rotation, or experience.
4. The program director must demonstrate how the change in duty hours will contribute to the residents' education.
5. The GME Committee may appoint a member of the committee to interview teaching faculty and residents to determine if the request for an exception is warranted.
6. The decision of the GME Committee shall be made after discussion and vote by the membership.
7. The decision of the GME Committee shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

APPROVED BY GMEC: November 20, 1995

REVIEWED BY GMEC: March 18, 2002

REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY GMEC: Feb. 24, 2003