

**Partners Graduate Trainee Vacation, Sick Time and Leave Policy:
Frequently Asked Questions
November, 2018**

This document was developed in response to questions arising after distribution of the policy revision dated September 28, 2018 - it will be updated from time to time as needed.

General:

Does the policy apply to trainees at all Partners hospitals?

Yes, Partners GME policies generally apply to trainees in programs sponsored by BWH, MEEI, McLean, MGH, NWH, NSMC, and/or Spaulding Rehab.

What are the major policy changes in this revision?

Major changes include increasing the annual vacation from a minimum of 10 working days to 4 weeks, and providing all parents (rather than just post-partum birth mothers) with 8 weeks of paid parental leave. Also, bereavement leave is now formally addressed as part of the policy.

When do the revisions to this policy become active?

Since schedules for AY18-19 were made before this policy was approved, changes to vacation time need not be implemented until AY19-20. However, programs that currently provide less than 4 weeks/year are encouraged to increase to 4 weeks for the current year if they determine that is possible.

Leave:

Are both male and female residents/fellows entitled to up to 12 weeks of leave after the birth of a child, and 8 weeks of paid leave?

Yes, there is no distinction based on a parent's gender.

Is the 8 weeks of salary continuance during parental leave a minimum or a standard?

It is intended as an institutional standard, except where a program has had a consistent practice of providing a longer period of paid leave (i.e. up to 12 weeks) and wishes to continue that practice. Note: to the extent that a program has provided longer periods of paid leave, and decides to continue to do so, it is expected to do so for all trainees requesting parental leave.

Can parental leave be delayed to some time *after* the new child has arrived, or taken on an intermittent basis?

The FMLA requires that parental leave be taken within a year of the new child's arrival, and per the FMLA part time or intermittent leaves are at the discretion of the employer. The Partners GME policy mirrors that:

- **Timing of leave.** *Parental leave must be taken within one year of the birth or adoption, unless an individual plan for part-time or intermittent leave has been approved by the Program Director.*

The Partners GME policy does assume that paid leave follows the child's arrival:

- **Parental leave:** *Graduate trainees who are the parent of a new child by birth, adoption, or placement in foster care are eligible for salary continuance for a period of eight weeks following birth, adoption or foster care placement.*

In terms of delaying leave, a new parent would likely take at least a bit of leave at the time of birth/adoption, so deferring some or most of the leave would represent an intermittent leave:

- **Structure of leave.** *If an intermittent or partial leave (i.e., a reduced work schedule) is requested, the Program Director may alter the Graduate Trainee's work schedule in order to accommodate the leave as deemed possible and appropriate within the context of the educational program and the clinical service.*

Program Directors determine whether or not an atypical leave schedule can be accommodated based on both education and clinical service (i.e. coverage) considerations.

Vacation:

Is 4 weeks/year of vacation a minimum or a standard?

A standard.

Does the policy assume that vacation weeks are 5-day work weeks or 7-day weeks?

A vacation week is assumed to be 7 days. (However, if the "work week" is typically 5 days adjacent to an off weekend, that 5+2 days off would constitute a vacation week.

Is there a minimum amount of notice that programs need to give residents regarding when their vacation blocks will occur?

There is no specific requirement. Programs are encouraged to give as much notice as possible so that trainees are better able to coordinate vacation plans with family/friends and find lower-cost travel options.

Is time at meetings or conferences considered as vacation or part of the Program?

This question should be directed to the Program Director. In general, if a meeting or conference is a required part of the training program, it should be considered as "work" and not scheduled during a vacation. If a trainee chooses to attend a meeting or conference on his/her own initiative during a vacation block, that time would generally still be considered vacation.

Make-up time:

How is the need for make-up time decided?

As noted in the policy, *"Since each Graduate Trainee must meet certain education requirements, as defined by the Program, ACGME and/or by the applicable American Board of Medical Specialties, the Graduate Trainee may be required to make up missed time due to a*

leave prior to advancing to the next level of training and/or prior to completion of the graduate medical education (GME) program.”

Make-up requirements may be defined by the national specialty board *and/or* by the individual GME program (and may or may not relate to ACGME requirements). Programs may require that certain rotations and/or specific educational experiences are completed, and/or that a threshold volume of certain clinical activities is achieved. Programs might also require a minimum amount of time in training, necessitating that any leave in excess of x weeks (beyond the 4 weeks of vacation) be made up, with a delay in the graduation date. Thus, some make-up requirements may be predictable -- i.e. known before a leave is taken.

Also, because Program Directors must affirm each graduate's readiness for independent practice, the need for make-up time may have to be determined by the Program Director after the leave, based on assessments closer to the time of planned graduation. When make-up time is required in this circumstance, it should not be interpreted as implying any deficits or need for remediation, but rather the application of a more routine, rather than a shorter, training duration.

It is essential for individuals taking a leave to discuss make-up requirements with the Program Director, and whether known make-up requirements can be accomplished within the originally planned duration of training (such as by substituting a required rotation for an elective) or will require an extension of training (to accomplish a threshold amount of time in the program). In some cases, the need for extension may hinge on scheduling issues. For example, making up key rotations before a planned graduation date may be allowable (e.g. by substituting for an elective) but not possible (based on other trainees' schedules or additional constraints).

Advance communication and planning regarding predictable make-up requirements is important. Trainees are encouraged to discuss the need for leave as soon as practicable.