

## PROCEDURE GME07

**Subject:**  
PAID TIME OFF AND OTHER LEAVES OF  
ABSENCE

**Effective Date:**  
NOVEMBER 2004

**Applies to:**  
HOUSTON METHODIST HOSPITAL SYSTEM  
GME PROGRAMS

**Date Revised:**  
APRIL 2024

**Originating Area:**  
GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**Target Review Date:**  
JULY 2025

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### **I. GENERAL STATEMENT**

All Houston Methodist employees, including Residents, are eligible for Paid Time Off (PTO), Bereavement, Family Medical Leave and other Leaves of Absence. Houston Methodist Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures concerning these leaves apply to all employees. In addition, Residents must fulfil the criteria for completion of their respective residency program, as set forth by their specialty board, which include stipulations on leaves of absence. This procedure outlines the process for requesting leave and highlights the exceptions to HR policies for Residents. The definitions of the various terms include references to the appropriate HR policies and procedures. Each Resident is responsible for reading and complying with all pertinent GME and the referenced HR policies and procedures.

### **II. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

- A. Paid Time Off. PTO is deposited into each Resident's account annually. Saturdays and Sundays do not count against Paid Time Off, but Residents must ensure that the Absence Request Form includes permission for weekend days for purposes of coverage.
  1. PGY1 Residents are granted sixteen (16) Working Days (128 hours) of PTO. PGY2 Residents and above are granted (21) Working Days (168 hours) of PTO. Unused PTO will automatically carry over to subsequent training years. Upon termination, Residents who have worked for Houston Methodist Hospital System for at least four years from their most recent hire date, will be compensated for their unused PTO (less applicable taxes), not to exceed the amount of PTO that was awarded for the current academic year. Example: A resident has finished the fourth academic year at Houston Methodist and has 208 hours remaining in the Bank PTO balance. Once the employment terminates, 168 PTO hours will be paid out with 40 hours being forfeited. Residents are not eligible to participate in the PTO sell program that is available to other Houston Methodist employees.
  2. Residents may use PTO for medical or personal reasons including, but not limited to, vacation, personal reasons, severe weather emergencies, or family or personal short-term illness.

3. Residents who are ill or for whom a family illness prevents them from working should notify their Program Coordinator and the service on which they are scheduled as soon as possible. A completed Absence Request Form for Paid Time Off should be submitted to the Program Coordinator.
- B. Residents are expected to work on holidays based on the needs of the Program/department. Schedules are worked out within the Program and based in part on staffing needs during any "holiday" period. Patient care is every Program's first priority; leave for religious observances cannot be guaranteed. When requested leave for religious observances conflicts with scheduled clinical duty, it is the responsibility of the Resident to make appropriate arrangements with the Program Director in advance to ensure adequate patient care coverage. It is the Resident's responsibility to ensure that his or her assigned rotation duty is covered. Appropriate substitute coverage must be approved in writing in advance by the Program Director. Residents who work on holiday should ensure that their Residency Coordinator has entered the appropriate notation into API Laborworkx.
  - C. Bereavement Leave: Residents may be granted bereavement as set forth in HR47, Bereavement Leave Policy, found in Policy Tech. The Resident should notify the Program Coordinator and the Supervising Faculty of the service on which they are scheduled as soon as possible of the death in the immediate family and the Resident's expected date to return to work. A completed Absence Request Form should be submitted to the Program Coordinator upon returning to duty.
  - D. Educational Leave: Up to five days of Education Leave per year. Requests to attend educational conferences or professional meetings must be appropriately documented on the Absence Request Form and the Pre-Travel Authorization form, if reimbursement is being requested (See [GME 35 Educational Leave and Reimbursement](#)). Residents may not use Educational Leave to present the same paper or poster more than once. Examples of Educational Leave include:
    1. Presenting papers at professional conferences/meetings
    2. Presenting poster exhibits at professional conferences/meetings
    3. Time off to take a licensure or board certification examination
    4. Attendance at meetings of professional organizations in which residents occupy official positions as officers or representatives

Educational Leave is not intended to be used for job interviews. Residents seeking time off for job interviews should use PTO. Unused Educational Leave does not roll over to the next year of training nor is it paid out at the end of training.

- E. Family and Medical Leave: In accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/benefits-leave/fmla.htm>) and the ACGME Sponsoring Institution Requirements Residents who have been employed by Houston Methodist are entitled to:
  - a. A minimum of six weeks of approved medical, parental, and caregiver leave(s) of absence for qualifying reasons;
    - i. Houston Methodist provides 240 hours of paid leave to be used for any time off from work that falls under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), such as the birth of a child or a serious health condition affecting you or an applicable family member. The paid leave hours are provided at the beginning of the residency or fellowship and are available for the length of the training period.

- b. At least the equivalent of 100 percent of their salary for the first six weeks of the first approved medical, parental, or caregiver leave(s) of absence taken;
- c. A minimum of one week of paid time off reserved for use outside of the first six weeks of the first approved medical, parental, or caregiver leave(s) of absence taken;\*
- d. Continuation of health and disability insurance benefits for residents/fellows and their eligible dependents during any approved medical, parental, or caregiver leave(s) of absence;
- e. Resident Responsibility: At least 30 days in advance if foreseeable, or as soon as possible if not foreseeable, discuss leave of absence plans with Program Director, Program Coordinator or the GME office. Residents must also notify the FMLA and Disability Administrator (New York Life) and provide all necessary documentation to support your need to be away from work.
- f. Any remaining paid leave hours referenced in II.E.a that remain at the end of the residency, fellowship or employment, or transfer to another position within Houston Methodist or non-benefits eligible status, are forfeited and may not be donated to another resident, fellow or employee.
- g. Leave hours do not extend the 12 weeks of job-protected leave under the FMLA nor time allowed in a continuous leave status under the Houston Methodist Leave of Absence policy.
- h. Residents and fellows are not eligible for the Houston Methodist Parental PTO benefit.

\*As part of the Paid Time Off granted in II.A.1 under this policy.

The Resident must notify their Program Coordinator in writing regarding any FML requests. The written notice must include a completed Absence Request Form and the Houston Methodist FMLA Certification Form ([http://www.houstonmethodist.org/workfiles/services/tmh/hr/benefits/fml\\_ee\\_packet.pdf](http://www.houstonmethodist.org/workfiles/services/tmh/hr/benefits/fml_ee_packet.pdf)). Extended leave may result in extension of a Resident's training time beyond the projected completion date of training.

- F. Military Leave: Absences for participation in the National Guard or military reserve activities must be coordinated with and approved by the Resident's Program Director. Absences may be charged to leave without pay or to PTO, if desired. An Absence Request Form with signatures from the Program Director and the Supervising Faculty on the service affected by the Resident's absence must be submitted in advance of the leave.
- G. Unpaid Leave of absence. A Resident must use all available Sick and Vacation leave before being placed on unpaid leave status, except for Military Leave. Health insurance and other benefits remain in effect only if the Resident pays for them during any unpaid leave of absence.

- H. Effect of Leave on Training: Some Residency Review Committees and specialty boards (of the American Board of Medical Specialties) have established lengths of training for each year of residency. Leaves of absence, regardless of the type, in excess of these requirements may result in extension of training beyond the projected completion date. Residents must be made aware of the length of training requirements for their program and discuss any issues related to training extensions with their respective Program Director. When additional time is needed by a Resident to fulfill Board or RRC requirements, a new Agreement of Appointment must be issued with the new dates that reflect the amount of additional training required by the Resident.

Program Directors must report to the Texas Medical Board (TMB) any Resident who holds a Physician-In-Training Permit and has been or will be absent from the Program for more than 21 consecutive days (excluding vacation, military or family leave not related to the Resident's medical condition) and the reasons why. If the absence will result in an extension of training, the Program Director may need to request a temporary complement increase from the Residency Review Committee.

- I. Program Policy on Leaves of absence: Each Program must have a written policy on PTO and leaves of absence that details the process for taking leave and any restrictions. The policy must be posted on New Innovations and be distributed to Residents and Faculty and must be consistent with HR and GME procedures and policies. A program may limit the number of Residents who may take Educational, Military, and Paid Time Off (other than for personal or family illness) at the same time and may limit the months in which Educational, Military, and Paid Time Off (other than for personal or family illness) may be taken.

### **III. COMMITTEE REVIEWING/APPROVING PROCEDURE**

1. Graduate Medical Education Committee [11 November 2004] revised [14 July 2005] [10 June 2010] [12 May 2011] [May 12, 2016] [10 October 2019] [July 2022]

#### AUTHORITATIVE REFERENCES

Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, Institutional Requirements, IV.G.