



Office of Graduate Medical Education

GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE POLICY NO. 25

A. SUBJECT: Trainee Mistreatment

B. EFFECTIVE DATE: September 16, 2020 (R)

C. POLICY

The University of Virginia Medical Center is committed to maintaining an optimal clinical learning environment to achieve safe and high-quality patient care and requires the highest standards of behavior from all those who are involved in the clinical learning environment, including faculty members, all residents and fellows (hereinafter “Trainees”), staff, and all other health care Practitioners.

The University Medical Center maintains its commitment to preventing Trainee mistreatment by providing a procedure for reporting instances of Trainee mistreatment, by providing support for Trainees subjected to mistreatment, and by responding with corrective action. This policy is intended to ensure an optimal clinical learning environment in which all Trainees may raise and resolve issues without fear of intimidation or retaliation.

This policy should be considered as supplemental to [Medical Center policy #0262, Standards for Professional Behavior for Practitioners](#).

D. STANDARDS

Trainee mistreatment will not be tolerated in the clinical learning environment. Examples of inappropriate behavior or situations that would be unacceptable include the following, but are not limited to,

- Threatening or abusive language, profanity or language that is perceived by Trainees or others to be demeaning, berating, rude, or offensive;
- Actual or threatened inappropriate physical contact that is unrelated to the provision of healthcare (Assault);
- Other forms of behavior that are perceived as intimidation or harassment by Trainees or others working within the Medical Center;
- Derogatory comments and jokes pertaining to race, age, color, disability, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, veteran status, stereotypic or ethnic connotation;
- Inappropriate or unprofessional criticism intended to belittle, embarrass, or humiliate a Trainee or others;
- Requiring a trainee to perform menial tasks intended to humiliate, control, or intimidate the Trainee;
- Unreasonable requests for a trainee to perform personal services;
- Grading or assigning tasks used to punish a Trainee rather than to evaluate or improve performance;

- Purposeful neglect or exclusion from learning opportunities as means of punishment or retaliation;
- Sexual misconduct (refer to [University Policy #HRM-040](#));
- Discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation (refer also to [University Policy #HRM-009](#)); and/or
- Disregard for Trainee safety.

While constructive criticism is appropriate in certain circumstances in the clinical learning environment, it should be handled in such a way as to promote learning, avoiding purposeful humiliation. Feedback that has negative elements is generally more useful when delivered in a private setting that fosters discussion and behavior modification. All feedback should focus on behavior rather than personal characteristics and should avoid pejorative labeling.

E. COMMUNICATION OF COMPLAINTS BY TRAINEES

Communication of the Complaint: When a report of Trainee mistreatment and a negative learning environment involving Trainee(s) or witnessed by Trainee(s) occurs, multiple avenues must be provided for both direct and anonymous reporting given the sensitive nature of complaints and the perceived power differential in lodging complaints. Reports of mistreatment or unacceptable behavior are handled confidentially to the extent possible given the obligation to investigate the report.

In addition to the process outlined in Medical Center policy #0262, the following avenues of reporting instances of Trainee mistreatment or a negative learning environment are also available for Trainees:

- Trainee meets with Chief Resident or Housestaff Council President
- Trainee meets with Program Director
- Trainee meets with other member of faculty
- Trainee meets with Chairman
- Trainee meets with DIO, Associate DIO, or member of GMEC
- Trainee uses anonymous GME hotline (434-806-9521)
- Trainee makes comments during confidential faculty evaluation, if available
- University Ombuds or Office for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights
uvaeocr@virginia.edu

Trainees can meet with anyone on the list and are not required to stay within their program or department before raising their concern to others in the Health System or University.

Information about complaints of Trainee mistreatment or a negative learning environment will be shared only with individuals essential to achieve resolution. Trainees must feel free to bring complaints without fear of retaliation. No person shall be subjected to any adverse action for making a good faith report of misconduct or participating in any proceeding under this policy.

F. RESOLUTION PROCEDURES FOR TRAINEES

Resolution procedures will follow [Medical Center Policy #0262, Standards for Professional Behavior for Practitioners](#).

In addition, any substantiated complaint of mistreatment as defined above against a person in a supervisory role to the trainee should lead to the removal of that person from their role in GME training.

Reviewed in the GME Policy Subcommittee: September 9, October 14, December 9, 2014 & January 13, 2015

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