Policy: Leave Policy

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<th>Original Approval:</th>
<th>Effective date:</th>
<th>Revision Date:</th>
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<td>December 1, 2016 (Editorial)</td>
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In this document, “Resident” refers to both specialty Residents and subspecialty Fellows.
The purpose of this policy is to describe various types of leaves of absence and the documentation related to leaves. These include: Family and Medical Leave of Absence, military leave, sick leave, vacation and other leaves of absence.

Family and Medical Leave of Absence (FML)

It is the policy of the University of Colorado School of Medicine Graduate Medical Education Committee to allow leave for maternity, paternity, adoption, illness/injury of a close relative that requires the Resident’s care, or illness/injury of the Resident. Residents may be granted up to 12 calendar weeks of leave during a 12-month period for certain family and medical reasons with the program holding the Resident’s position within the training program. The 12-month period is measured from the first date FML is taken.

Leaves are granted at the discretion of the Program Director and with the prompt notification of the Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education, provided that the time away does not cause any undue hardship for the program as defined by the Program Director. The Program Director must provide the Resident with accurate information regarding the impact of a leave of absence as it applies to the Resident’s satisfactory completion of the program and eligibility to participate in examinations by the relevant certifying board(s).

The only paid leave available to Residents is 3-weeks vacation and/or 1-week educational leave (PGY 2 and above) per contract year. Once this time is exhausted, the Resident must go on unpaid leave. If leave is granted, the Resident must first use any time remaining from the current year’s vacation and/or educational leave as part of the leave in order to continue to receive their stipend. If the Resident is allowed to reserve a portion of paid leave to use at a later date in the contract year, the Program Director must state in the Leave Documentation (see below) that this exception has been made. Vacation and/or educational leave cannot be used to extend the length of the leave beyond the 12 weeks.

Benefits during a Family and Medical Leave of Absence:

During the 12-week period of Family and Medical Leave of Absence, the funding source will continue to pay its’ portion of the cost of the Resident’s current benefit coverages through GME. The Resident will be responsible for his/her monthly premium contribution.

Benefits for leaves that exceed, or are not eligible for, the 12-week period of Family and Medical Leave:

Health and Dental: During this leave, the Resident must self-pay entire premium(s) to maintain coverage. If the Resident is eligible and decides to continue benefits through the COBRA continuation of the CU GME Health Benefits Plan, the Resident must follow the procedures in the Plan Document posted at
Long-Term Disability: Premiums for long-term disability coverage are paid by the funding source during the first 90 days of an approved Family and Medical Leave. Self-payment of the premium is not allowed. A Resident on Family and Medical Leave that involves personal (not family) disability should contact the GME Benefits Office as soon as it is realized that the leave may exceed 90 days. The Resident will be given information on how to file a long-term disability claim. Disability benefits may be available beginning the 91st day of a disability. When the resident returns from leave, the decision of whether or not long-term disability coverage can be reinstated and the terms of reinstatement will be subject to the provisions of the disability insurance policy.

Life Insurance: During an approved leave period when the funding source is not required to pay the life insurance premium, the Resident may elect to continue life insurance coverage through GME by self-payment of the monthly premium. If the Resident chooses to not pay the life insurance premium, coverage will be canceled until the Resident’s return.

Other Leave of Absence

Requests to take a leave of absence other than Family and Medical Leave or to extend a leave beyond the 12-week period of Family and Medical Leave must be made through the Program Director and with the notification of the Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education. Such requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis, with the Program Director determining whether an unpaid leave will be granted (with the program holding the Resident’s position) or if the Resident would be required to resign in order to take such leave.

Benefits during this leave are the same as those above for leaves that exceed, or are not eligible for, the 12-week period of Family and Medical Leave. Residents must be made aware that it is their responsibility to arrange for insurance coverage during this time, and be given information on how to contact the GME Office with inquiries.

Leave Documentation

Any time a leave of absence is granted, the Resident must receive a signed letter from the Program Director documenting the terms of the leave (see required inclusions below). The Resident will co-sign the letter in acknowledgment, and return the letter to the Program Director who will promptly forward a copy to the Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education.

Program Directors are encouraged to address leave plans and begin preparation and submission of draft leave documentation to GME for review as soon as a potential leave is made known. Contact the GME Benefits Office for leave letter documentation sample language. The draft will be reviewed by GME to confirm it accurately adheres to the terms of the GME Leave Policy and contains all of the required documentation. The reviewed draft will be returned to the Program Director with any necessary clarifications or corrections.

As soon as the letter is finalized and signed by the Program Director and Resident, the Program Director will provide a copy of the final letter to GME. Should the terms or conditions of the actual leave change, GME will work with the Program Director for adjustment of the leave documentation. To assist with timely and accurate tracking of the leave GME will verify leave status with the Program Director when the leave is scheduled to begin. In the event of an unforeseeable situation where leave documentation could not be prepared in advance, the Program Director must notify GME as soon as possible but no later than the start date of the leave. GME will provide assistance with leave documentation preparation in order to ensure timely reporting of the leave.
Leave documentation must include the following:

1) Reason(s) for the leave.
2) (Anticipated) start and end dates of the leave and date of expected return to training.
3) Dates of paid leave and dates of unpaid leave.
4) Plan for any time and/or rotations that the Resident will be required to make up in order to satisfactorily complete the program (consistent with the rules of the RRC) and/or to be eligible to participate in examinations by the relevant certifying board(s).
5) A statement notifying the Resident that:
   a) The funding source’s portion of the premiums for his/her current GME insurance coverage(s) will be paid for up to 12 weeks of Family and Medical Leave;
   b) The Resident must maintain health insurance coverage while in a CU GME training program; and
   c) The Resident is responsible for contacting the GME Benefits Office prior to the expiration of the 12-week FML period to obtain information regarding eligibility and self-payment for coverages for time away from training that exceeds the 12 weeks of FML.

Definitions

Educational Leave - PGY 2s and above may receive up to one week of paid educational leave at the discretion of the Program Director. One week consists of 5 business days and 1 attached weekend. This leave should be primarily to attend major conferences and meetings. Educational leave generally cannot be accumulated from year to year.

Military Leave - Military leave will be considered the same as an approved (NON medical) leave of absence and requires the same leave documentation as stated above, with the exception of 5). In the case of a Military leave, the Resident must contact the GME Office regarding benefits while on Military Leave prior to the start of the leave. The Military Leave portion of this policy will adapt to comply with USERRA regulations.

Sick Leave - Residents do not accrue an annual sick leave allotment. However, leaves of absence are granted as needed when approved by the Program Director. Residents are encouraged to seek medical attention as necessary so that they may best serve their patients and attend to assigned duties. Sick leave may not be used in lieu of vacation and such substitution is strictly prohibited.

Vacation - Residents are granted a total of 3 weeks of paid vacation. One week consists of 5 business days and 1 attached weekend. Vacation leave generally cannot be accumulated from year to year. Residents are expected to use vacation leave for interviews. Many programs require that all leaves be scheduled at the beginning of the academic year or far enough in advance to maintain compliance with duty hours.

Before starting leave, a Resident must have completed all patient medical records in the hospitals.