



Policy Number:	26-09
Policy Name:	Graduate Medical Education: Vacation and Leaves of Absence Policy
Authority:	ACGME Institutional Requirements effective September 3, 2025, section 1.12.e, 4.2.b.2, 4.8
Original Policy Date:	February 27, 2026 Effective Date: 02/27/26
Supersedes:	24-01
Policy Last Revised:	N/A
Attachments:	N/A

PURPOSE

This policy describes how Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, San Mateo County (BHRS-SMC), as a Sponsoring Institution for ACGME-accredited graduate medical education (GME) programs, provides vacation and leaves of absence to residents and fellows in a manner that is consistent with applicable laws and meets ACGME Institutional Requirements. This includes specific provisions for medical, parental, and caregiver leaves of absence, salary continuation, benefits continuation, and communication about the impact of leave on program completion and board eligibility

BACKGROUND

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Institutional Requirement 4.8 states the Sponsoring Institution must have a policy for vacation and leaves of absence that is consistent with applicable laws. This policy must:

1. provide residents/fellows with a minimum of six weeks of approved medical, parental, and caregiver leave(s) of absence for qualifying reasons at least once and at any time during an ACGME-accredited program, starting the day the resident/fellow is required to report;
2. provide residents/fellows with 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;
3. provide residents/fellows with 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;
4. ensure 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;
5. describe the process for submitting and approving requests for leaves of absence;



6. be available for review by residents/fellows at all times; and
7. ensure that each ACGME-accredited program provides residents/fellows with accurate information regarding the impact of extended leaves on program completion and board eligibility.

This policy establishes how BHRS-SMC meets and implements these requirements.

DEFINITIONS

Vacation: Paid time off granted to residents/fellows for rest, personal time, and other non-medical reasons, in accordance with BHRS-SMC policies and applicable laws.

Medical Leave of Absence: Approved leave for the resident's/fellow's own serious health condition or disability, consistent with applicable laws and institutional policies.

Parental Leave of Absence: Approved leave for the birth, adoption, or placement of a child, or to care for a newborn or newly placed child, consistent with applicable laws and institutional policies.

Caregiver Leave of Absence: Approved leave to care for a qualifying family member with a serious health condition or other qualifying reason, consistent with applicable laws and institutional policies.

Approved Leave of Absence: Any vacation, medical, parental, caregiver, or other leave that has been requested and approved through the process described in this policy and in applicable institutional and County policies.

Continuous Leave of Absence: A leave of absence in which the resident/fellow is absent from work for continuous days or weeks.

Extended Leave of Absence: A leave of absence of sufficient duration and/or timing away from work, typically exceeding standard time-off policies, that may affect a resident's/fellow's ability to satisfy criteria for satisfactory completion of the program or eligibility for certification examinations, as determined by the program and relevant certifying board(s).

Intermittent Leave of Absence: Intermittent leave may be taken for a serious health condition certified by a health care provider in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Leave may be taken periodically in increments of one (1) workday, such as for medical appointments or treatments. Time not worked is unpaid unless the resident/fellow elects to use available paid time off, as permitted under applicable law and institutional policies and benefits. For foreseeable medical visits, residents/fellows should make a reasonable effort to schedule appointments in a way that limits disruption to program operations and assigned rotations. Intermittent leave may be used only when the resident or fellow is on an approved leave of absence under this policy.

POLICY

I. General Policy on Vacation and Leaves of Absence

- A. BHRS-SMC's ACGME-accredited programs will maintain a policy for vacation and leaves of absence for residents and fellows that is consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as County and California Department of State Hospital (CA-DSH) policies.



- B. This policy establishes minimum standards; BHRS-SMC or individual programs may provide additional or more generous benefits, provided they remain consistent with ACGME requirements and applicable laws.
- C. All vacation and leaves of absence must be managed in a manner that supports resident/fellow well-being, patient safety, and fulfillment of educational requirements.
- D. For BHRS-SMC employees, information for all types of leave is available at:
<https://www.smcgov.org/hr/leave-absence>
- E. For DSH employees, information for types of leaves is available at:
<https://benefits.calhr.ca.gov/state-employees/> or here:
<https://hrmanual.calhr.ca.gov/Home/ManualItem> then review section 2100 – Leave.

II. Required Medical, Parental, and Caregiver Leave Entitlements

- A. Minimum Six Weeks of Leave
 - 1. BHRS-SMC’s ACGME-approved programs will provide each resident/fellow with a minimum of six weeks of approved medical, parental, and/or caregiver leave of absence for qualifying reasons that are consistent with applicable laws at least once during an ACGME-accredited program.
 - 2. This entitlement will be available at any time during the program, starting on the day the resident/fellow is required to report, subject to applicable eligibility and qualifying criteria under law and institutional policy.
- B. Salary Continuation
 - 1. BHRS-SMC’s ACGME-approved programs shall provide residents/fellows with 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 during the ACGME-accredited program.
 - 2. Salary continuation beyond the first six weeks will be determined in accordance with applicable laws, County policies, and BHRS-SMC’s ACGME-approved programs benefit provisions.
- C. Additional Paid Time Off
 - 1. BHRS-SMC’s ACGME-approved programs will provide residents/fellows with 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 during the program.
 - 2. This additional week of paid time off may be used for vacation or other approved leave consistent with institutional policy and scheduling requirements.
 - 3. This additional week of time off may be contiguous with the leave period, at the discretion of the residents/fellows.



III. Continuation of Benefits During Leave

A. Health and Disability Insurance

1. BHRS-SMC's ACGME-approved programs will ensure the 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, consistent with applicable laws and plan provisions.
2. Information regarding premium contributions and any changes to coverage during leave will be provided to residents/fellows in coordination with Human Resources and benefits administration.

IV. Information on Program Completion and Board Eligibility

A. Impact of Extended Leave

1. BHRS-SMC's ACGME-approved programs will ensure that each ACGME-accredited program provides residents/fellows with accurate, timely information regarding:
 - a. the impact of extended leaves of absence on the criteria for satisfactory completion of the program; and
 - b. the impact of extended leaves on the resident's/fellow's eligibility to participate in examinations by the relevant certifying board(s).
2. Program Directors will review individual training timelines with residents/fellows when extended leave is requested or taken and will document any required extension of training.

V. Availability of Policy

- A. BHRS-SMC will ensure that this Vacation and Leaves of Absence Policy is available for review by residents and fellows at all times through the GME manual, BHRS-SMC intranet, or similar accessible location.

PROCEDURE/PROTOCOL

I. Requesting Vacation and Leaves of Absence

- A. Residents/fellows seeking vacation or a leave of absence (medical, parental, caregiver, or other approved leave) must:
 1. notify their Program Director as early as practicable, consistent with program and institutional expectations;
 2. submit a written request using the applicable leave request form or electronic system; and
 3. provide any required supporting documentation (e.g., medical certification) as required by applicable laws and institutional policies.



- B. For BHRS-SMC employees, information for all types of leave is available at:
<https://www.smcgov.org/hr/leave-absence>
- C. For DSH employees, information for all types of leave is available at:
<https://benefits.calhr.ca.gov/state-employees/> or here:
<https://hrmanual.calhr.ca.gov/Home/ManualItem> then review section 2100 – Leave.
- D. For foreseeable leaves (such as planned surgery, delivery, or adoption), residents/fellows should provide notice as far in advance as reasonably possible to facilitate scheduling and coverage planning.
- E. For unforeseeable leaves, residents/fellows must notify their Program Director and follow institutional call-out procedures as soon as reasonably practicable.

II. Review and Approval of Leave Requests

- A. Program Director Responsibilities
 - 1. Program Directors will review leave requests in collaboration with Human Resources and applicable offices, as needed, to ensure compliance with laws, County, State, and CA-DSH policies, and this institutional policy.
 - 2. Program Directors will assess the impact of the requested leave on:
 - a. scheduling and patient care coverage;
 - b. the resident's/fellow's educational progress; and
 - c. potential effects on program completion and board eligibility.
 - 3. Program Directors will communicate approval, denial, or requests for modification of leave in writing and will document decisions in the resident's/fellow's file consistent with institutional requirements.
- B. Human Resources/Benefits Coordination
 - 1. For the psychiatry residency, BHRS-SMC Human Resources or the appropriate County office will process approved leaves in accordance with applicable laws and benefit plans.
 - 2. For the forensic psychiatry fellowship, the California Department of Human Resources (<https://benefits.calhr.ca.gov/state-employees/>) or the appropriate State office will process approved leaves in accordance with applicable laws and benefit plans.
 - 3. Residents/fellows will be informed of salary continuation details, benefit continuation, and any required employee contributions during the leave period.

III. Tracking Leave and Training Requirements

- A. Programs will maintain records of residents'/fellows' vacation and leave utilization, including medical, parental, and caregiver leaves.
- B. Program Directors will review accumulated leave when determining whether a resident/fellow has met the requirements for satisfactory completion of the program, in consultation with relevant certifying board policies.



- C. When an extended leave requires extension of training, the Program Director will:
 1. discuss the required extension and revised end date with the resident/fellow; and
 2. document the extension, including the rationale, in the resident’s/fellow’s record.

IV. Communication and Policy Availability

- A. GMEC will ensure that this policy and related procedures are:
 1. reviewed with residents and fellows at orientation;
 2. reviewed with Program Directors and relevant administrative staff; and
 3. posted and maintained in accessible locations (e.g., GME manual, intranet).
- B. Programs will direct residents/fellows to this policy when discussing vacation, medical, parental, and caregiver leave options and requirements.

V. Oversight and Compliance

- A. GMEC will oversee implementation of this policy across ACGME-accredited programs and will review, at least annually, program compliance with institutional leave policies, including the required six weeks of paid medical/parental/caregiver leave and the additional week of paid time off.
- B. GMEC will review summaries of leave utilization and any identified issues related to program completion or board eligibility arising from extended leaves and may recommend policy or process changes as needed.

VI. Policy Review

- A. This policy will be reviewed at least every year, or more frequently if ACGME requirements, County policies, or applicable laws change, to ensure ongoing compliance with ACGME Institutional Requirements and institutional and County standards.

SIGNATURES

Approved: _____ *Signature on File*
 Dr. Jei Africa, PsyD, FACHE
 BHRS Director

Approved: _____ *Signature on File*
 Tasha Souter, MD, FASAM
 BHRS Medical Director

Approved: _____ *Signature on File*
 Peter Dell, MD
 BHRS ACGME Designated Institutional Official



REVISION HISTORY

Date of Revision	Type of Revision	Revision Description