

Vacation and Leave Policy FAQ's

Reporting expectation: All leaves of absence from training **must** be reported by the training program to the GME Office and documented in New Innovation at the beginning of an approved leave.

1. What is the difference between a personal day and a vacation day?
 - a. Vacation and personal days are part of the same pool of paid time off (4 weeks). Paid time off can be taken all in 1-2 week intervals as vacation, or some can be reserved to be taken as single days off ("personal day"). A personal day is equivalent to an individual vacation day, it can be used for any reason, but requests for individual days must fit within individual program scheduling policies and are limited to 7 individual days.
2. How should program directors balance personal day requests with clinical duties?
 - a. Program directors are encouraged to have a written program-specific policy for use of personal days.
 - b. The program director may limit the number of requested personal days for a specific day if patient care will be impacted.
3. Can personal days be used for sick days if a trainee has already used 14 sick days?
 - a. Yes, individual paid time off days must be used after a trainee has exhausted their 14 paid sick days.
4. Does a trainee need to take a personal day for a medical/dental appointment?
 - a. No. Personal days are meant to be used when a trainee needs to be gone for a full day.
 - b. Residents and fellows should work with PDs to schedule non-urgent appointments during time/rotations that are most amenable for leaving work.
5. If we are going to an educational or research conference, or we need a day off to take a licensing exam (USMLE), do we need to take a personal day?
 - a. No. For attendance at conferences to present research or for educational purposes, programs can use the *GME named Off-Site Meeting/Course rotation in New Innovations.
 - b. Individual programs may limit the total number of days away or educational/research conferences attended each year and may also place guidelines/limitations as to when house staff can attend educational/research conferences.
 - c. For USMLE exams, defer to program-specific policies so that this time can be accounted for appropriately.
6. Is there a time period for use of bereavement days after an event? What if there is more than one family death in a year?
 - a. Bereavement days can be used any time during the academic year. They do not roll over to future academic years.

- b. House staff are able to take 3 bereavement days per event. They do not have to be taken consecutively.
- 7. I would like to take parental leave this academic year. How much time do I get off paid and unpaid?
 - a. If the trainee has not taken any PTO days and they have not previously taken a parental/caregiver/medical leave ONCE during their training, the trainee can use a maximum of 8 weeks of paid leave. This would be covered by taking 4 weeks of vacation, 2 weeks of sick time and 2 weeks of parental leave. If the trainee wanted to take a longer period of leave, the remaining time could come via unpaid days per either FMLA or PD-approved leave
 - b. If the trainee has already used PTO in that year, then those days are subtracted from the 6 weeks of PTO time to give a remaining number of PTO days available for paid approved parental leave, plus the additional 2 weeks of paid leave time (if still available to the trainee).
 - c. If the trainee has taken a previous parental/caregiver/medical leave, then the only paid time off is the remaining PTO days and any remaining time from the 2 weeks of eligible parental/caregiver/medical leave.
 - d. Trainees may apply for unpaid leave if eligible under applicable institutional leave policies and must inform Program Director prior to applying for leave when possible. The program director and trainee must review and discuss Board eligibility requirements to determine if additional time away warrants an extension of training.
- 8. If I am a WU-employed trainee and am not eligible for FMLA, what do I need to do to arrange for unpaid leave?
 - a. All trainees are eligible for unpaid leave under the GME consortium leave policy as noted above.
 - b. WU-employed trainees should contact their PD to discuss the leave time they wish to take. The PD will need to record any leave time in New Innovations and advise the department HR manager of the need for extended unpaid time away.
 - c. The PD should review with the fellow any impact that unpaid leave will have on length of training.
 - d. The training program must report the leave in New Innovations for tracking purposes.
- 9. If I take parental leave will my training be extended?
 - a. The trainee and PD must review their Specialty Board guidelines for extensions of training to understand the impact of time away on requirements for board certification. The Program Director and trainee should also discuss the need to achieve other educational goals for competency and clinical experiences that could impact the need for an extension of training.

10. If a trainee takes off 8 weeks in a 1-year program (only works 44 weeks out of 52), will they need to extend their training? What is the definition in weeks of one full years' worth of training?

- The trainee and PD must review their specific Specialty Board requirements to understand the impact of time away on requirements for board certification. The program director also determines competency for completion of training.

11. If my partner is giving birth or we are adopting, am I able to use sick time or the 2 weeks of additional leave time for parental leave?

- Depending on how much paid time off you have already taken during the academic year, you may be eligible to use your remaining sick time and if you exhausted all types of paid leave and have not already taken the additional two weeks of paid leave during your training program you will be able to use any remaining paid parental leave. The policy applies for any parent, biologic or adoptive, for parental leave.

12. Does a trainee have to use the GME additional 2 weeks' consecutively, or are they allowed to use a week at a time?

- The GME 2 weeks leave does not need to be used consecutively; it can be used at 1 week intervals to support trainee leave.

13. If a resident/fellow does not work weekends, do they get 14 sick weekdays?

- Yes. The institutional policy allows all residents/fellows 14 sick days.

14. Do the flex/personal days count toward duty hour off day requirements?

- No. All accredited programs are required to build rotation schedules to be compliant with current ACGME work hour requirements for one day off in seven, averaged over a month, as well as the 80-hour limit (averaged over a month). Flex/personal days should be used for resident/fellow requests to be off on a scheduled workday. Flex/personal days should not be used to ensure opportunities for rest between scheduled assignments. Work hour documentation must reflect all hours worked, and time off during the month to document compliance of all residents/fellows in the training program.

15. If a training program does not have trainees work weekends, would a week be defined as M-F for personal days?

- A week is defined as a 7 day week (Monday – Sunday)
- A program can define how personal/flex days are used for scheduled workdays. It is important to emphasize that all time off is intended for use for scheduled time. For example, the program-specific policy could state that all residents get 5 weekdays and 2 weekend days where they have scheduled work commitments as personal days. This would allow a resident to request a personal day on a weekend that they were scheduled to take call.

16. Do trainees actually get 28 days versus 20 days (4 weeks M-F) if they are never required to work weekends?

- a. Weeks are defined as a 7-day week (e.g., Monday-Sunday). There are 4 weeks of paid time off. Even if residents are never required to work weekends, their vacation weeks would be a full 7 days, inclusive of the weekend.

17. Can programs decide to offer 7 flex days in addition to their 3 weeks of vacation?

- a. Programs must document how vacation time will be used in their program leave policy.

18.

- i. Programs can choose to offer 7 personal/flex days in addition to their 3 weeks of vacation.
- ii. Programs can choose to offer 4 weeks of vacation without personal/flex days.
- iii. Programs can allow residents to choose at the beginning of the year between 4 full weeks of vacation (in block lengths defined by the program) or 3 weeks of vacation plus 7 personal/flex days. In total the time off should be 4 weeks.

19. What guidance is provided to PDs to help determine what they can or cannot do when approving/denying personal requested days off?

- a. PDs should try to offer as much flexibility as possible, while also ensuring adequate staffing for patient care. The general aim of offering personal days is to allow residents to have the option for single days off when they need to attend to personal or family needs, similar to what most professionals in the workplace are able to do. Some examples of limits include:
 - i. PDs can for example limit the number of people that take personal days on any given day or week.
 - ii. PDs can limit the specific rotations that residents can take personal days.
 - iii. PDs can request that non-urgent personal day requests be submitted a certain time period in advance. When asking for advanced notice it is important that PDs ensure trainees know you will be supportive if unexpected things come up that result in a need for a personal day.
- b. PDs should not require that trainees share their reason for a personal day with others without a definite need to know. The goal of this is to respect personal privacy and not limit personal days based on any specific reason for the request.

20. Can PDs determine specific black out times in which vacation cannot be taken or ask trainees to take vacation certain weeks of the year?

- a. PDs can determine specific time periods when vacation cannot be taken and/or ask that trainees choose between certain weeks for some of their vacation time.
- b. PDs should try to offer as much flexibility as possible, recognizing that trainees have limited control over their schedule most of the time.
- c. PDs do not have to honor all vacation requests. For example, a PD might ask trainees to submit their top 3-4 vacation week requests but note ahead of time that not all weeks will be guaranteed.

21. If a trainee must extend training because of time taken for parental, caregiver or medical leave, what happens to their benefits and salary?

- a. All benefits remain in place during time off.
- b. If the trainee is extending their training, their salary will be that of the PGY year they have extended. For example, if they remain a PGY2 for several additional

weeks due to time taken off during the PGY2 year, their salary will remain that of a PGY2, and will advance to that of a PGY3 when they advance in their training program.