

General Psychiatry Residency Program Guidelines for Resident Accommodations and Leaves of Absence (Time Away, Training Modifications, and other accommodations)

Background and Purpose

The Department of Psychiatry is committed to supporting equitable opportunities for success in training for all residents in our program. Trainees with existing, newly acquired, or previously undiagnosed disabilities (including chronic health issues, mental health, learning, sensory, or mobility disabilities) or other personal circumstances (including family member illness/injury, personal loss, caregiver need, or parental leave) may require accommodations to fully access training and education. We encourage trainees to seek necessary accommodations, training modifications, or leaves of absence. Accommodations are a shared responsibility and require the cooperation of the individual and institution to find the kinds of accommodations necessary to support a trainee's success in training.

The Department of Psychiatry values disability as a form of diversity in our program and engages in a robust interactive process to determine reasonable workplace accommodations. The Residency Program is committed to creating a transparent and navigable process for accessing accommodations. Priorities guiding this process include equity, confidentiality for the resident, and transparency of process.

The purpose of this document is to establish principles and procedures regarding accommodation/leave pursuance through the Office of Learner Affairs, and implementation by the Residency Program to assist postgraduate trainees to meet essential requirements and competencies in the Psychiatry Residency Program.

Definitions of Terms

1. **Disability:** The Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the "Code") defines "disability" to mean:
 - a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
 - b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - d. a mental disorder, or an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

2. **Accommodations:** are reasonable adjustments to the learning and working environment that permit people with disabilities to have equitable opportunities to succeed, and to access equal benefits of education. They are not an advantage. Accommodations serve to remove the barriers to achievement as a result of a disability but do not alter the essential academic requirements and competencies that a postgraduate trainee is required to meet. Accommodations are a shared responsibility and require the cooperation of the individual and institution (i.e., hospitals, clinics, etc.) throughout the process to determine what kinds of accommodations, if any, are reasonable and necessary in the circumstances. Reasonable accommodation may require members of the University community to exercise creativity and

flexibility in responding to the needs of postgraduate trainees with disabilities and may require significant advance planning. However, such accommodation cannot compromise the core competencies of the Program of study, and it also cannot compromise the health and safety of the trainee, the patients or other members of the health care team.

Statement on Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a key principle guiding the accommodations process in the Department of Psychiatry Residency Program. Residents are not required to disclose a diagnosis or any personal health information to the program. The Office of Learner Affairs does not communicate any information about the nature of an illness, disability, or personal concern with the Program. Only the functional limitations and required accommodations, and NOT the nature of the disability, need to be disclosed to the Program Director – and only as necessary to implement the accommodations.

All leaves of absence, including those arising from disability, will be communicated to the Office of Learner Affairs, and the Office of Learner Affairs reports these to the College of Physicians and Surgeons in accordance with applicable legislation, which may require disclosure of the reasons for the leave. If residents have further questions related to CPSO reporting, they may discuss these during their meeting with the Office of Learner Affairs.

Process for Requesting Accommodations

To ensure equal access to accommodations across postgraduate medicine programs, accommodations are determined centrally by the [Office of Learner Affairs](#). Residents or fellows at any stage of training who wish to apply for accommodations, training modifications, or leaves of absence related to health, disability, or personal concerns should contact the Office of Learner Affairs Director/Associate Director for confidential guidance and support on meeting their training and health needs. To make an appointment, residents can contact ola.reception@utoronto.ca. In order to ensure rapid access to **interim accommodations** (up to 2 months) while awaiting an intake appointment with the Office of Learner Affairs, residents may also simultaneously contact the Psychiatry Program Director.

The process for pursuing accommodations through the Office of Learner Affairs is deliberately kept separate from the Residency Program to ensure confidentiality for the resident and transparency of process. This process also allows the Residency Program to focus its efforts on effective collaboration with the resident toward implementation of recommendations from the Office of Learner Affairs.

As part of the accommodations process, residents may be required to provide documentation from a healthcare provider outlining the nature of the barriers requiring accommodation, along with recommended accommodations. They are not required to disclose a specific diagnosis. The Office of Learner Affairs will work with the resident to determine reasonable accommodations that can be implemented in their training and communicate these suggestions to the Psychiatry Residency Program Director. The Program Director liaises with the resident's local Site Director in advance of clinical rotations to help facilitate timely implementation of the accommodation into the resident's rotations. This may include communication of necessary adaptations/ changes to rotation operations to primary supervisors of rotations. At the end of each rotation, the Program Director, resident and local Site Director will communicate about the accommodations implemented during the rotation, what was helpful, and what might be implemented for future rotations. The Program Director will communicate these recommendations forward. The Program Director also works with the Chief Resident(s) and the Psychiatry Residents' Association of Toronto Co-Vice Presidents, who are responsible for call scheduling and allocations respectively, to ensure call-related accommodations and leaves of absence are integrated in the resident call pool schedules.

Process for Return to Work from Leave of Absence

The Office of Learner Affairs is responsible for facilitating a resident's return to work (RTW) following a leave of absence. The Office of Learner Affairs will contact the Program Director with recommendations on strategies for a successful return to work, including considerations for full- vs. part-time and modified rotations (e.g., alterations in call requirements, etc.).

Unique Circumstances for Accommodation

There are certain instances where a resident may not require a meeting with the Office of Learner Affairs for approval of a leave or accommodations (for example, a brief one-time leave/accommodation for a medical procedure requiring a rehabilitation period, or a planned parental leave). The Office of Learner Affairs and/or Program Director can help navigate these specific situations. Similar to previously, the resident is never required to disclose a specific diagnosis.

If a possible need for an accommodation is identified by someone other than the learner (for example, originates from a supervisor), the Office of Learner Affairs Directors will contact the learner to confirm the request for accommodation or whether additional information or processes (e.g., Board of Medical Assessors, etc.) are appropriate.

Waiver of Training Following a Leave of Absence

Residents who have taken a leave of absence during training can apply for a waiver of training in their final year of residency. As per the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC), residents who have demonstrated the required competencies in a 5-year training program can be granted up to 3 months of training waived. More information on the Department's Waiver of Training Policy can be found [here](#).

The above guidelines are based on and align with the Guidelines for Accommodations for Postgraduate Trainees, UofT PGME.

<https://pgme.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Guidelines-for-Accommodations-for-Postgraduate-Trainees.pdf>

Prepared by: Associate Program Director & Chair, PRPC Subcommittee on Resident Wellbeing

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