

University of Colorado School of Medicine

Graduate Medical Education

Policy: Duty Hours		Policy #
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Purpose:

To ensure that residents have an optimal learning environment by ensuring that duty hours and on-call time periods are not excessive.

Policy:

The University of Colorado School of Medicine policy on duty hours for residents follows the intent and language found in the Accrediting Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) guidelines addressing this topic.

Supervision of Residents

- a. All patient care must be supervised by qualified faculty. The program director must ensure, direct and document adequate supervision of residents at all times. Residents must be provided with rapid, reliable systems for communicating with supervising faculty.
- b. Faculty schedules must be structured to provide residents with continuous supervision and consultation.
- c. Faculty and residents must be educated to recognize the signs of fatigue and adopt and apply policies to prevent and counteract the potential negative effects.

Duty Hours

- a. Duty hours are defined as all clinical and academic activities related to the residency program, ie, patient care (inpatient and outpatient), administrative duties related to patient care, the provision for transfer of patient care, time spent in-house during call activities and scheduled academic activities such as conferences. Duty hours do not include reading and preparation time spent away from the duty site.
- b. Duty hours must be limited to 80 hours per week, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of all in-house call activities.
- c. Residents must be provided with 1 day in 7 free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a 4-week period, inclusive of call. One day is defined as one continuous 24-hour period free from all clinical, educational and administrative activities.
- d. Adequate time for rest and personal activities must be provided. This should consist of a 10-hour time period provided between all daily duty periods and after in-house call.

On-Call Activities

The objective of on-call activities is to provide residents with continuity of patient care experiences throughout a 24-hour period. In-house call is defined as those duty hours beyond the

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normal workday when residents are required to be immediately available in the assigned institution.

- a. In-house call must occur no more frequently than every third night, averaged over a four-week period.
- b. Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, must not exceed 24 consecutive hours. Residents may remain on duty for up to 6 additional hours to participate in didactic activities, transfer care of patients, conduct outpatient clinics and maintain continuity of medical and surgical care (unless further limited by the relevant Program Requirements).
- c. No new patients, as defined in Specialty and Subspecialty Program Requirements, may be accepted after 24 hours of continuous duty.
- d. At-home call (pager call) is defined as call taken from outside the assigned institution.
 - 1) The frequency of at-home call is not subject to the every third night limitation. However, at-home call must not be so frequent as to preclude rest and reasonable personal time for each resident. Residents taking at-home call must be provided with 1 day in 7 completely free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a 4-week period.
 - 2) When residents are called into the hospital from home, the hours residents spend in-house are counted toward the 80-hour limit.
 - 3) The program director and faculty must monitor the demands of at-home call in their programs and make scheduling adjustments as necessary to mitigate excessive service demands and/or fatigue.

Moonlighting

- a. Program directors must ensure that moonlighting does not interfere with residents' ability to achieve the goals and objectives of the educational program.
- b. Program directors must comply with the Graduate Medical Education Committee (GMEC) written policies and procedures regarding moonlighting. The intent and language of the GMEC policy seeks to comply with ACGME Institutional Requirements III.D.1.k.
- c. Moonlighting that occurs within the residency program and/or the sponsoring institution or a non-hospital sponsor's primary clinical site(s), i.e., internal moonlighting, must be counted toward the 80-hour weekly limit on duty hours.

Oversight

- a. Each program must have written policies and procedures consistent with the Institutional and Program Requirements for resident duty hours and the working environment. These policies must be distributed to the residents and the faculty. Monitoring of duty hours is required with frequency sufficient to ensure an appropriate balance between education and service.
- b. Back-up support systems must be provided when patient care responsibilities are unusually difficult or prolonged or if unexpected circumstances create resident fatigue sufficient to jeopardize patient care.

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Duty Hours Exception

An RRC may grant exceptions for up to 10% of the 80-hour limit on duty hours to individual programs. That exception must be based on a sound educational rationale. However, approval for the proposed exception from the GMEC is required prior to submitting a request to the appropriate RRC.

General eligibility criteria require that The University of Colorado School of Medicine, as the sponsoring institution, has a Favorable Status standing from the most recent review by the ACGME Institutional Review committee and that the program seeking exception must be accredited in good standing, i.e., without a warning or a proposed or confirmed adverse action.

Process for Requesting Exception:

Programs seeking an exception to the 80-hour limit must submit a formal request to the Office of Graduate Medical Education. The request should address the following elements:

Patient Safety

Information must be submitted that describes how the program will monitor, evaluate and ensure patient safety with extended resident work hours.

Moonlighting

Include information from the program's moonlighting policies for the period in question.

Call Schedules

Include specific information addressing the call schedule for the period in question.

Faculty Monitoring

Include evidence of faculty development activities regarding the effects of resident fatigue and sleep deprivation. (This may be submitted as an appended document)

Educational Rationale

Information described in terms of the program's stated goals and objectives for the particular assignments, rotations and level(s) of training for which the increase in hours is requested. Blanket exceptions for the entire educational program should be considered the exception, not the rule. Significant attention should be given to explaining why the program goals and objectives cannot be successfully attained through adherence to the 80-hour duty limit. More specifically, an application for exception should include information addressing (1) steps that have been considered for reallocation or developing additional resources to allow compliance with the 80-hour limit, (2) steps that have been considered to alter scheduling of activities (educational and service) to allow compliance with the 80-hour limit and (3) steps that have been considered with specific respect to changes in personnel that have been considered to allow compliance with the 80-hour limit.

The Associate Dean for GME will oversee an initial assessment of the request for exception and submit a report for review by the GMEC. A majority vote by GMEC members eligible to vote

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and present at the time at which the proposal is considered shall be considered as institutional approval of the request for exception.

For programs requiring subsequent formal approval by a RRC, the program making a request shall draft a letter to the appropriate RRC seeking approval for the exception. The Associate Dean for GME, as the DIO, must co-sign the letter of request prior to any program forwarding to the RRC the request for exception. Programs must forward a copy of the institutional policy on duty hours along with the signed letter of request to the RRC.