DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY | DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE

Policies and Procedures

Subject: Time Away from Training	
Created: March 2023	Revised: June 2024, December 2025
Reviewed and approved by the Residency Program Committee Full: December 2025	Next review date: December 2028

Time away from training affects clinical exposure, skill acquisition and the ability to assess residents in training. This is of importance for individual clinical learning experiences but also cumulatively through residency. The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) expects residents to successfully complete all educational requirements mandated by their training program. Dalhousie University's Department of Family Medicine (DFM) has developed this policy to summarize in a transparent manner how time away from training will be managed.

This policy was created following the Maritime Resident Doctors (MarDocs) Collective Agreement. The full agreement can be viewed here: https://www.maritimeresidentdoctors.ca/starting-residency/working-as-a-resident/collective-agreement

Minimal Attendance of Clinical and Academic Experiences:
For more information on the minimal attendance of clinical and academic experiences, see the Dalhousie Family Medicine Minimal Attendance of Clinical and Academic Experiences posted here https://medicine.dal.ca/departments/core-units/pgme/policies-and-guidelines.html

Time Away Requests:
Residents are requested to make all time away requests as far in advance as possible. This includes all activities that will require a resident to be absent from call and clinical duties. Time away requests must list the number of working days, weekend days and/or holidays away, and the leave type. For family medicine rotations, requests for vacation and education leave need to be made at least two (2) months in advance of the placement start date using the appropriate communication methods for the site. When a resident requests vacation three months in advance, services must respond within 30 days of receiving the request.

Time away requests including vacation, education leaves, days in-lieu, and float days must be approved by:

1. The supervisor and clinic/call scheduler of the service impacted by the time away,
2. The resident's home program Site Director (or designate), and
3. The person in charge of the call schedule needs to be informed

Parental/Pregnancy/Adoption Leaves:

- Resident to notify the Site Administrator, in writing, following the MarDocs Collective Agreement timelines, with the following:
    a. start date of the leave, and

b. estimated return date.

Illness Leave, Unpaid Leave, Paid Leave

In all cases where a formal leave of absence is taken:

- The Site Administrator will inform the Site Director who will then report the leave at the next RPCE meeting. The Site Director will then authorize the Site Administrator to enter the leave into the Residency Management System (RMS).
- The Site Director and Site Administrator may inform the resident that:
    a. Scheduling of clinical learning experiences are subject to changes/revisions prior to and/or following a leave of absence,
    b. How missed educational sessions will be made up, and
    c. Adjusted timelines will be applied towards:
        - Periodic Review meetings
        - Faculty Advisor meetings
        - Primary Preceptor meetings
        - Resident Project Forms

Unplanned Time Away:

- Resident to notify clinic supervisor/clinical admin as per the service's protocol as soon as possible.
- Resident is to consider if on call obligations will be missed and notify appropriate supervisors.
- Resident to arrange for patient handover as appropriate.
- Resident to notify the Site Administrator with time away date(s) and type(s).

Vacation:

Residents will be granted 20 paid vacation days per full academic year (pro-rated for less than full year), as per the MarDocs Collective Agreement. When requesting 5 consecutive vacation days, only one weekend will be guaranteed off - either before or after as per PGME policy. Residents may include their preferred weekend in the request for consideration by the scheduler(s). Although every attempt will be made to accommodate time off requests, it may not always be possible to do so. In shift-based rotations, (Ex: ER blocks) weekend days taken off as vacation will be deducted from the vacation bank but otherwise weekends do not draw from the vacation bank of 20 days.

Unused vacation days cannot be carried over from year to year without written approval of the Program Director; carry-over will not be approved unless the resident can demonstrate that reasons beyond their control prevented the use of vacation. If deemed satisfactory, carry over of up to two weeks may be approved, and this carry-over vacation must be taken within the first two (2) blocks/months of the following academic year.

Floating Leave Days:

As per the MarDocs collective agreement, residents may request the use of Floating Leave days similar to lieu day requests. As per the contract, one day is available every 4 month cycle of active residency. These cannot be carried over to the next 4 month cycle, unless interrupted by a leave of

absence. The timing of these must be discussed with and approved by the clinical supervisor and Site Director (or designate), with as much notice as possible.

Statutory Holidays and Lieu Days:
Residents who work on statutory holidays (except those over the holiday break between December 21 and January 3, which MUST be taken during the mandated 6 days off during this break) are entitled to take a day in lieu, as per the MarDocs Collective Agreement. This includes residents who are on call between 00:00 (midnight) and 08:00 on a statutory holiday.

Use of Lieu Days:
Residents entitled to a lieu day shall take the lieu day off within 60 days of the statutory holiday worked. Since call schedules are released at least one month in advance, residents are strongly encouraged to:

1. Schedule their lieu day as soon as they are aware of their schedule, and
2. Schedule the lieu day with the same service that made them work the statutory holiday.

A leave must be requested as outlined above; the statutory holiday worked must be clearly indicated on the Time Off request form. A lieu day cannot be used before the resident works on the stat holiday. Failure to take a lieu day before the 60 day deadline forfeits the lieu day, and lieu days cannot be carried over beyond the 60 days.

Continuing Professional Development Days/Educational Days:
Residents are eligible for up to seven (7) education days per academic year of Continuing Professional Development Days (CPD)/Educational days. Please reference the Dalhousie Department of Family Medicine's Continuing Professional Development Policy for more details.

Time off for Examinations:
LMCC/CFPC Examinations:
Family Medicine residents are entitled to educational leave for the purpose of taking any Canadian professional certification examination (LMCC and CFPC exams). This leave will consist of the exam date and reasonable travel time if required. Residents are to be released as follows:

- Released from call duties by 1200h (noon) on the day prior to exam date;
- Released from clinical duties by 1800h on the day prior to the exam date; and
- This leave shall conclude at 0600h on the day following the exam date.

CFPC Examination:
FM-PGY2s are entitled to educational leave for the purpose of studying for the CFPC exams. This study leave will consist of eight (8) days in two blocks of four (4) consecutive days or seven (7) consecutive days without on-call or clinical duties.. Residents are to be released from both on-call and clinical duties as follows:

- Released from clinical duties and call duties by 1800h the day prior to the study leave; and
- This leave shall conclude at 0600h on the day following the exam date or last day of study leave.

Reasonable Travel Time: In addition to the educational leaves for both the LMCC and CFPC examinations, reasonable travel time to and from the nearest available testing centre will be granted, if applicable. Travel time will vary for each resident across the Maritime provinces. Those residents who need to travel should consult with their Site Director (as per the collective agreement) to discuss travel time requirements.

Sick Leave:
Residents are not expected to come to work or attend academic activities when they are sick. Residents are entitled to up to ninety (90) working days (eighteen (18) calendar weeks) of sick leave per annum (based on the resident's academic year).

1. When residents are sick and will not be presenting for work or academic activities, appropriate individuals must be notified in a timely manner prior to the absence. This includes:
    a. the Site Administrator (always),
    b. clinical admin/schedulers, and
    c. appropriate faculty.

Failure to notify may be deemed unprofessional and may be recorded as an unexcused absence.

2. For sick days, the employer may require reasonable proof of illness for any period claimed over 5 days. Supporting documentation* may be requested at the Site Director's discretion. A medical note should be requested for sick leaves longer than 7 consecutive days and/or for repetitive use of sick leaves. As instructed by Dalhousie's PGME office, when a resident is sick for more than seven (7) consecutive days, the site administrator is required to contact PGME staff for further direction/consultation.

3. For illnesses longer than 7 consecutive days, the Site Administrator will automatically notify the Site Director who will bring the resident's missed time to the RPCE for review if the sick time may result in an extension of residency. As per PGME's instruction, the resident will be requested to provide a supporting documentation* to the site administrator. Accumulative absences resulting in difficulty determining competencies could result in extension to the training end date.

4. Depending on the circumstances and time away from training, a note to demonstrate readiness to return to training may be required. Return to training notes should be requested with any sick leave greater than 4 weeks.

**Supporting documentation:*
Supporting documentation should be from a qualified treating professional and confirm the need for a time away. The length of the time away and a return date must be outlined in this letter. All supporting documentation must be provided on office letterhead, from the resident's fully licensed practicing physician, clinical psychologist or other appropriate licensed healthcare provider (the practitioner cannot be a relative or spouse of the resident).

Bereavement Leave:
In the event of a death in the immediate family, a resident shall be granted up to seven (7) calendar days of leave of absence without loss of pay for the purpose of attending the funeral and other matters related to the deceased effective the date the death occurs. Immediate family includes: parent, spouse, brother, sister, child, legal guardian/ward, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild. The Resident may defer a portion of the leave to a later date no later than twelve (12) months following the death to attend a funeral, internment, or similar ceremony related to the death.

In the event of the death of a son-in-law or daughter-in-law, a resident shall be given one (1) day leave of absence without loss of pay for the purpose of attending the funeral. An additional two (2) consecutive days of travel time shall be provided without loss of salary if the resident must travel outside the base in which they are stationed, to attend the funeral.

Pregnancy/Parental Leave/Resident Parental Leave/Adoption Leave:
Following the MarDocs collective agreement, the resident shall inform the Site Administrator/Site Director of a planned absence and the expected leave start and end dates. The Site Administrator will be responsible to communicate a release from service, and rescheduling placements to ensure required clinical learning experiences are secured. This may involve rearranging the residency schedule. These absences will be reviewed by the RPCE and then entered into the RMS tool by the Site Administrator. This tool, owned by Dalhousie University's Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) office, will be processed by PGME office staff who will notify the employer (Nova Scotia Health), MarDocs, Department of Family Medicine's Medical Education staff, the provincial college, and program director, and the resident's site director and administrator with confirmation of the leave details, including extension of the training.

If a resident takes the 1 week Resident Parental leave or Adoption Leave, this will not change the residency end date unless it interferes with minimal attendance expectations or the ability to assess competencies and does not have to be entered into the RMS.

Special Leave:
Residents may request other special leave for personal reasons. Where in the opinion of the resident's Site Director circumstances are warranted, special leave with or without pay may be granted. Leave may be granted for family illness, emergencies which cannot be served by others or attended to by the resident during off duty, or medical/dental appointments. Depending on the length of time away from training, the RPCE may review and involve Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) to make a recommendation regarding extension of training. Depending on the type and length of the leave, supporting documentation may be requested.

Pay while away:
Please refer to Maritime Resident Doctors Collective Agreement:
https://www.maritimeresidentdoctors.ca/starting-residency/working-as-a-resident/collective-agreement/leave-of-absence

Educational Requirements:

Educational requirements that are affected by time away from training such as resident projects and clinical audits, should still be completed. For adjusted deadlines, the resident should contact the appropriate site leads.

Accommodations Upon Return:
See Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) website for accommodations policy:
https://medicine.dal.ca/departments/core-units/pgme/policies-and-guidelines.html

Support required:
Time Away from Training can be stressful. If the resident requires additional support, they should be encouraged to contact the Office of Resident Affairs:

- NS & PEI based residents: 902 494 3232
- NB based residents: 506 636 6007
- Resident.affairs@dal.ca

Additional Things to Consider:
Depending on the type and length of time away, the resident may be able to apply for various fee reduction. Please contact CMPA, local College of Physicians and Surgeons, and local provincial medical association.