



THE AMERICAN BOARD *of* PEDIATRICS
Certifying excellence in pediatrics – for a healthier tomorrow

December 2, 2020

Dear Pediatric Residency and Fellowship Program Directors and Coordinators,

The ABP supports and salutes pediatric trainees, pediatric program leaders, and board-certified pediatricians who, consistent with the ABP mission, are advancing child health under extraordinary circumstances. In response to inquiries about decisions by the ABP regarding Absences from Training secondary to disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summary is as follows:

Current Absences from Training Policy

The current ABP Absences from Training Policy should cover most circumstances of absences from the program related to the pandemic. This policy allows for up to **five months in a three-year residency or fellowship** for an individual to be absent from training, subject to attestation of the trainee's competence by the Program Director (PD) and Clinical Competency Committee (CCC). For programs not three years in duration, an update to our Absences from Training policy will be shared in Spring 2021. We encourage programs to facilitate completion of required rotations, even if these rotations are different from their traditional format. Training disruptions that were addressed through schedule modifications or by using an innovative or novel approach (i.e. telemedicine for continuity clinic) are not considered Absences from Training.

The Absences from Training Policy applies only for those rotations or experiences that the PD and CCC deem to be completely missed or deficient. These missed experiences are addressed on a case-by-case basis using our waiver process, which begins no earlier than three months prior to completion of training for an individual resident or fellow. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, other reasons for waivers include personal illness, parental leave, or family illness. Waivers are not permitted for convenience to graduate from training early or for late starts due to VISA and other issues.

Policy Modifications due to the Pandemic

We anticipate a modification of our Absences in Training Policy to specifically address deficiencies secondary to the COVID-19 pandemic for residents and subspecialty fellows graduating in 2021. Under this policy modification, the ABP may consider waivers for required rotations or experiences for trainees graduating in 2021 if the requirement was missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and competence is attested by the PD in conjunction with the CCC. Further details regarding both modifications and the process for requesting waivers will be communicated in the spring of 2021. At

that time, we will have a clearer picture of the disruptions created by the ongoing pandemic over the coming winter months.

In the meantime, the ABP expects programs to use the principles of competency-based medical education (CBME) to address potential deficiencies in training. The ABMS and ACGME recently released [statements](#) on the use of CBME to address disruptions related to COVID-19. PDs and CCCs have a variety of mechanisms available to assess trainee readiness for unsupervised practice, including [Entrustable Professional Activities \(EPAs\)](#), Milestones, and aggregate data from various assessment methods (in-training examinations, clinical evaluations, multi-source feedback, direct observation in real or simulated situations, etc.). The ABP strongly encourages the use of EPAs as a framework for developing learning and assessment plans for trainees.

PDs and CCCs should also supplement routine Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) with enhanced learning opportunities specifically designed to address deficiencies from missed experiences in 2020. Consistent with the ABMS and ACGME statements, these enhanced ILPs should be in place by January 1, 2021 for missed experiences that occurred in 2020. In the spring, we will communicate an approach to rotations or experiences missed after January 1, 2021, and this communication will be in advance of the time when the waiver process may be initiated.

Thank you again for your commitment to residents and fellows, and we appreciate your thoughtful and innovative approaches to education during this challenging time.

Best wishes to you and your family to remain healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

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