

# Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency Program RESIDENCY SAFETY POLICY

Updated: December 4, 2015

## 1. BACKGROUND

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the College of Family Physicians of Canada have collaborated in developing national standards for Residency programs. Standard B 1.3.9 states that:

“3.9 The residency program committee **must** have a written policy governing resident safety related to travel, patient encounters, including house calls, after-hours consultations in isolated departments and patient transfers (i.e. Medevac). The policy should allow resident discretion and judgment regarding their personal safety and ensure residents are appropriately supervised during all clinical encounters.

3.9.1 The policy **must** specifically include educational activities (e.g. identifying risk factors).

3.9.2 The program **must** have effective mechanisms in place to manage issues of perceived lack of resident safety.

3.9.3 Residents and faculty **must** be aware of the mechanisms to manage issues of perceived lack of resident safety.”

The document, “University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine, Postgraduate Medical Education Resident Health and Safety Guidelines” available at:

<http://www.pgme.utoronto.ca/Assets/PGME+Digital+Assets/policies/Health+and+Safety+Guidelines.pdf?method=1> provides background to the relationship between the University and all clinical teaching sites with respect to resident safety. Procedures for reporting and responding to specific circumstances are contained in that document. The PHPM residency program formally acknowledges, endorses and agrees to adhere to these guidelines. The PHPM program recognizes the unique application of this policy in public health field rotations.

## 2. PURPOSES OF THIS POLICY

The purposes of this policy include:

- To augment the above PGME guidelines by identifying program-specific safety risks.
- To describe the mechanism in place at the program level for addressing, reporting, and/or reducing unsafe events and conditions.
- To establish that residents have the right to use their judgment when deciding if, when, where, and how to engage in clinical, public health practice and/or educational experiences that they perceive to involve safety risks.

## 3. SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The University, teaching sites, the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and the Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency Program, and residents in the program share responsibility for resident safety.

- The University and all (fully and partially) affiliated teaching sites as well as ambulatory, outpatient and private practice locales are accountable for the environmental, occupational, and personal health and safety of their employees.
- Residents must adhere to the relevant health and safety policies and procedures of their current teaching site.
- All teaching sites must meet the requirements of the PARO-CAHO collective agreement.
- The PHPM residency program is responsible for identifying and communicating foreseeable safety risks related to education carried out within the program, educating residents about risk minimization strategies, and for making decisions about educational experiences that take into account, among other things, the educational benefit relative to any safety risk.

- Residents in their PGY1-2 years who are engaged in clinical Family Medicine training are subject to the resident safety policy of the Department of Family and Community Medicine.

This policy outlines the provisions to address safety concerns related to educational activities undertaken as part of the PHPM residency program.

#### **4. POLICY STATEMENT**

- a) Reporting of, and response to, all manner of incidents related to Environmental Health, Occupational Health, and Personal Health and Safety will be addressed as outlined in the document, “University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine, Postgraduate Medical Education Resident Health and Safety Guidelines.”
- b) The PHPM residency program requires residents to engage in the following specific situations that may pose a safety risk:
  - house calls or home call with a local or regional public health agency
  - work in isolated or poorly protected environments
  - exposure to potentially dangerous environments
  - exposure to potentially harmful bodily fluids
  - exposure to environmental hazards
  - encounters with potentially violent or aggressive patients or community members
  - exposures to potentially dangerous equipment and/or high risk transportation
- c) The program commits to providing residents with a full disclosure of foreseeable potential risks associated with these activities. The program will ensure that residents receive education and preparation for these activities using best available evidence and practices AND assess residents for appropriate understanding PRIOR TO involvement in these activities.
- d) Residents will not be required to see patients, community members, agency staff or other individuals alone in any of the above situations if not appropriately supervised.
- e) Residents must immediately notify their supervisor or program director or chief resident of perceived safety concerns
- f) It is recognized that, at times, a resident may be called upon to respond to an acute situation involving a patient or public health emergency which poses a risk to the resident’s personal safety and wellbeing. Residents are expected to consider the effect on themselves, the patient and others when deciding on a course of action. Every effort should be made to consult more experienced health care providers, supervisors/faculty or staff and seek assistance, support or alternative courses of action. Ultimately, residents should use their best judgment when deciding if, when, where, and how to engage in clinical, public health and/or educational experiences. Should a resident fail to engage in such an experience (or engage in a manner other than what has been requested or previously expected of them) due to perceived safety concerns, the resident will report this to their field site supervisor immediately AND to the residency program director at the earliest reasonable time.
- g) Residents involved in safety-related events or who have safety concerns are encouraged to contact the office of resident wellness, PGME.
- h) A resident should not encounter negative repercussions for decisions they made in good faith related to personal safety concerns.

- i) The residency program committee will review all concerns brought forth and take steps to minimize future risk.
- j) Should there be a situation in which a resident repeatedly fails to engage in an activity that can be reasonably considered part of their specialty practice, that is a mandated component of the residency training, and for which all means of risk reduction and education have been instituted by the program, the residency program committee will review the circumstances in the context of the specialty-specific and general CanMEDS physician competency frameworks. Disputes or appeals of decisions made by the residency program committee will be referred to the Vice Dean or Associate Dean, PGME.

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