

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

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## **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 temporary or permanent disabilities (including chronic health issues, mental health, learning, sensory, or mobility disabilities), family status needs, or other personal circumstances may require supports to fully access training and education. We encourage trainees to seek necessary accommodations, training modifications, or leaves of absence if required. 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 opportunity to succeed 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 pursuant 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. **Family status:** status of being in a parent-child relationship, or parent and child "type" of relationship examples include: Parents/guardians caring for children, caring for aging parents/relatives with disabilities. May not be based on blood or adoptions ties. Residents who have been assessed by OLA for adverse impact may qualify for family status accommodation.

3. **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 between the resident, Office of Learner Affairs, program director and clinical supervisor 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. All accommodations require documentation from the Office of Learner Affairs. 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, cannot rise to the level of undue hardship, and 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; however, where applicable, personal health information (including diagnosis, functional limitations, etc.) will need to be disclosed to the Office of Learner Affairs for the purpose of evaluating requests for accommodations and determining what accommodations, if any, are reasonable and necessary in the circumstances. The Office of Learner Affairs does not communicate any information about the nature of an illness, disability, family status circumstance, or personal concern with the Program. Only the approved accommodations, and NOT the nature of the disability, need to be disclosed to the Program Director. OLA and the Program Director will communicate these accommodations to those who need to know in order to facilitate the implementation of accommodations.

All leaves of absence, including those arising from disability, will be communicated to the Office of Learner Affairs and PGME. PGME 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. For more information see: [PGME Guidelines for Residency Leaves of Absence](#)

### **Process for Requesting Accommodations**

To ensure a consistent process for 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, family status or personal concerns should contact the Office of Learner Affairs reception to be connected with the appropriate contact at OLA who can support on meeting their training and health needs. To make an appointment, residents can contact [ola.reception@utoronto.ca](mailto: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 for learners with disabilities, 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, and this medical information is kept confidentially in the Office of Learner Affairs. For family status accommodations, residents may be required to provide information about nature of the obligation, other supports available, and documentation available to support the request (e.g., daycare contract with late pick-up policy).

The Office of Learner Affairs will work with the resident and the program to determine reasonable accommodations that can be implemented in their training, to the point of undue hardship, and communicate these accommodations 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. All accommodations must have accompanying documentation from OLA, either shared by the resident or communicated confirmation by the PD to Site Director/Chief Residents.

### **Process for Return to Work from Leave of Absence**

The Office of Learner Affairs is available to facilitate a resident's return to work (RTW) following a leave of absence. The Office of Learner Affairs can contact the Program Director with recommendations on strategies for a successful return to work, including considerations for a gradual return and accommodations to training (full- vs. part-time, 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 supervisor will encourage the learner to reach out to the Office of Learner Affairs to discuss. The supervisor could also complete the faculty referral form on the Office of

Learner Affairs website, with the learner's consent. The Office of Learner Affairs will then confidentially contact the learner to discuss 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/sites/default/files/assets/db-resource/document/accommodation-guideline-document-pgmeac2024.pdf>

<p><b>Prepared by:</b> Associate Program Director &amp; Chair, PRPC Subcommittee on Resident Wellbeing <b>Approved by PRPC:</b> October 7, 2024 <b>Date of next scheduled review:</b> 2027</p>
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