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Services
Policy Area Rehabilitation
Therapies
Applicability UNC Medical
Center

Leave Policy for Rehabilitation Services Residents and Fellows

I. Description

Describes the policy and procedures for all duly appointed residents and fellows (referred to as “trainees” in this policy) within a University of North Carolina (UNC) Hospitals' Rehabilitation Services Residency/Fellowship program regarding unpaid and paid time off (PTO) through various leave procedures (Vacation, Sick, Parental, Family and Medical (FML), Military).

A leave will be granted when operating conditions permit or when necessary to comply with federal guidelines (FML / Military). PTO will be prorated for all trainees based upon their clinical work hours, as well as those who are appointed for only partial terms, or whose appointments are extended for less than a one-year period of time.

II. Policy

Trainees within training programs at UNC are classified as temporary employees and do not qualify for the UNC Medical Center’s Paid Time Off (PTO) Leave policy, UNC Health’s [Leaves of Absence - System Policy](#), and UNC Health’s [Paid Parental Leave- System Policy](#). As such, these trainees require unique policies that provide similar, but not equivalent, leave periods.

Each trainee must meet certain education requirements, as defined by the training program, and may be required to make up time away due to a leave prior to completion of the training program. Association standards (APTA, AOTA, ASHA, etc.) vary in their board eligibility and certification requirements.

Trainees with an appointment other than UNCMC GME shall defer to their appointed work site for PTO and leave policies.

A. Paid Time Off

Paid time off may be granted for approved vacation or illness. One hundred and sixty (160) hours of PTO are granted for vacation, holidays, sick leave, bereavement, wellness, and education.

Sick Leave can be used to attend medical or dental appointments, illness significant enough to interfere with the performance of duty, inclusive of time needed for mental health, or when advised by Occupational Health directives (e.g., related to a communicable disease) or care for an immediate family member.

1. Leave must be taken in half or full-day increments.
2. Unused PTO is not eligible to be paid out upon separation.
3. When a trainee has given their resignation, they are not eligible to request PTO. Prior approved PTO will be granted.
4. If a Program Director/Coordinator and Work Supervisor request verification of the need for time off for absences greater than 3 consecutive days, the trainee shall coordinate this with their health care provider.
5. PTO is prorated for the duration of the appointment and partial terms. PTO cannot be taken during the first and last 3 weeks of the program except with Work Supervisor approval. Family Medical Leave (FML), including Service Member Family Leave, follows federal/state guidelines
6. All PTO must be approved by the Work Supervisor and submitted per clinic guidelines. It is up to the discretion of the Work Supervisor to approve the leave based on staffing needs.

B. Types of Leave

A leave of absence (paid or unpaid) may be granted for the following reasons:

- PTO
- Military Leave - follows federal guidelines
- Bereavement Leave - Bereavement Leave is incorporated into PTO. For the death of an Immediate Family Member (spouse, child, step-child, parent, step-parent, brother, sister, step-brother/sister, grandparent, grandchild, step-grandchild, foster child, mother/father-in-law, brother/sister-in-law, daughter/son-in-law, aunt, uncle), a trainee may take up to three days of PTO or up to five days if travel outside the state of North Carolina is required. Additional usage of PTO may be approved at the discretion of the Work Supervisor after consultation with the Program Director/Coordinator. If a trainee does not have PTO available at the time of the death of an Immediate Family Member, then the trainee may take an equivalent amount of unpaid Bereavement Leave.
- Personal Leave - trainees are eligible for a job-protected Personal Leave of Absence. In addition, the trainee must not have received a written warning or higher corrective action.
A trainee must apply in writing for a Personal Leave of Absence, setting forth the reason for the leave, the date on which the trainee wishes the leave to begin, and the

date on which the trainee anticipates returning to active employment. In the event the need for Personal Leave is unforeseeable, the trainee must submit a written request for Personal Leave within 7 days of the beginning of the leave. Trainees who fail to submit the written request within the 7-day time frame risk disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

- Professional Leave -This leave is determined and granted by the individual Program Directors/Coordinators and Work Supervisors. Time spent presenting or attending program-related educational activities, such as conferences, may not be counted as PTO if the activity is approved by the Program Director/Coordinator and Work Supervisor.

Processes related to obtaining a leave of absence should be reviewed with the Program Director/Coordinator and Work Supervisor at the time of new hire orientation.

Family Medical Leave, Service Member Family Leave, and Personal Leave are based on a rolling calendar year.

Trainees ineligible for FML during their first year of employment may be eligible for Personal Leave.

It is the responsibility of the Work Supervisor, not of the trainee taking a leave, to make arrangements for coverage of the trainee's clinical responsibilities in the case of sick, family, medical, or bereavement leave.

C. Eligibility for Personal Leave

Trainees are eligible for a job-protected Personal Leave of Absence upon approval of Program Director/Coordinator and Work Supervisor. In addition, the trainee must not have received a written warning or higher corrective action. Trainees who need a Personal Leave of Absence based on exigent circumstances and who have not received counseling sessions or Program Director/Coordinator/Work Supervisor feedback regarding other issues, such as tardiness problems for example, may be considered for a Personal Leave of Absence, at the discretion of the trainee's Program Director/Coordinator and Work Supervisor and after consultation with Human Resources.

Following these guidelines, a trainee may request and may be granted Personal Leave of Absence for the following reasons:

- The trainee's serious health condition, which renders the trainee unable to perform the essential functions of the job, as documented by a physician (or other licensed health care provider working within the scope of her or his license).
- For birth of a son or daughter, and to care for the newborn child.
- For placement with the trainee of a son or daughter through adoption or foster care.
- To care for the trainee's spouse, son, daughter, legal ward, or parent, in-laws, or sibling with a serious health condition, as documented by a physician (or other licensed health care provider working within the scope of her or his license).
- A family crisis, which may include, but is not limited to, house fire; death of a spouse, child, or parent; ill or injured parent; or family member who lives out of the local area

and the trainee is needed to help care for him/her.

A trainee can be granted a maximum of 4 weeks for an unpaid Personal Leave of absence and must use all available Paid Time Off prior to taking unpaid Personal Leave. Trainees requesting Personal Leave in connection with the birth of a child may be granted a maximum of 6 weeks of Personal Leave, but must use all available Paid Time Off prior to taking unpaid Personal Leave. The trainee is required to return from the Personal Leave on the originally scheduled return date. If the trainee does not return to work as scheduled, it will be considered a voluntary resignation unless other action is required by applicable federal or state law. A trainee is eligible for only one Personal Leave of Absence in a 12-month period from the date the leave starts.

D. Benefits During Personal Leave

Paid Time Off: Trainees must use all available Paid Time Off prior to taking an unpaid Personal Leave of Absence.

Benefits and Insurance: Trainees on a continuous Personal Leave of Absence may continue coverage(s) by arranging through Human Resources payment of the appropriate premium(s). Discuss in detail with your local Benefits Analyst prior to going on leave.

Expenses for dependent care incurred during a period of Personal Leave greater than 2 weeks are not reimbursable under any dependent care flexible spending account benefit program.

E. Payroll Consideration

Following a Personal Leave of Absence, it may be necessary for pending deductions (such as for missed benefit contributions) to be taken from the first paycheck after the trainee returns to work.

III. Procedure

A. Scheduling Leave

Whenever the need for leave is foreseeable, the trainee will make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly burden the program, and give notice no fewer than thirty (30) days before the leave is to begin. If the nature of the leave requires that the leave begin in fewer than thirty days, the trainee will give notice as soon as is practicable. A trainee should give the Program Director/Coordinator and Work Supervisor notice as far in advance as possible regarding planned parental leave or family medical leave; six months (confidential) notice is requested for planned leave after the birth of a child, in order to facilitate appropriate scheduling.

When a trainee requests leave under FML, the trainee should also contact the [third-party administrator](#).

B. Effects on Completion of Residency/Fellowship Program

The Program Director and/or Program Coordinator will determine whether a trainee is able to satisfactorily complete the program requirements following an extended absence of more than six weeks. If it is determined that the trainee is unable to complete the program within the original program time frame, the Program Director and/or Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Residency-Fellowship Administrator and the applicable Departmental Director(s) will terminate the trainee from the program. The trainee will be given preference for enrollment in the program during the subsequent year, contingent upon continued eligibility and available positions.

Each program must provide its trainees with the following:

1. A written policy in compliance with its Program Requirements concerning the effect of leaves of absence, for any reason, on satisfying the criteria for completion of the residency/fellowship program.
2. Information relating to access to eligibility for certification by the relevant certifying board.
3. Upon initiation of leave, it is the responsibility of the Program Director/Coordinator to determine what specific experiences or activities that may be missed during a leave need to be made up, even if the time spent on leave does not need to be made up. A tentative plan to fulfill expected program requirements should be signed by the Program Director/Coordinator and the trainee as close to initiation of the leave period as possible.

IV. Responsible for Content

Rehabilitation Services Leadership

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Stat Administrator	Judith Strubin: Mgr Program-IP	04/2026
HCS VP Rehab and Musculoskeletal Services	Mark Prochazka: HCS VP Rehab and Musculoskeletal Services	04/2026
Asst Dir Therapy Svcs	Brian Trabulsi: Asst Dir Therapy Svcs	04/2026
PolicyStat Administrator	Judith Strubin: Mgr Program-IP	04/2026

Applicability

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