

Project Vida Health Center
Graduate Medical Education
Policies and Procedures

Physician Impairment Policy

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Purpose: To outline the procedure for resident/fellow who may be impaired while training at Project Vida Health Care Center (PVHC) residency training program(s). It is the goal of the institution that resident physicians provide compassionate and safe medical care to patients at all times. Toward this end, it is important to recognize signs of impairment in trainees that may compromise care of patients as well as care of themselves. Impairments have the potential to endanger the well-being of the healthcare provider while also impacting the standard of care and the safety of their patients.

Policy:

1. Program Directors and faculty must monitor residents for the signs of impairment, and especially those related to physical disorders, burnout, suicidal, substance abuse, and or other psychiatric and behavioral disorders. The primary goal of this policy is to encourage the early identification of potentially impaired residents, facilitating their access to education, evaluation, and treatment. Additionally, it aims to establish transparent procedures for managing residents who may be impaired. It is crucial to note that this policy does not intend to replace or modify the existing standards and requirements outlined in PVHC policies concerning drug and alcohol use, conduct, and professionalism. Residents who are on prescription medications that affect their ability to safely engage in residency training-related activities must adhere to the provisions of this policy. It is implicit in this policy that impairment is viewed as a result of medical and behavioral issues. It is believed that with proper diagnosis, treatment, and progress towards recovery, impaired residents can potentially return to work in a suitable capacity.
2. It is also the responsibility of every individual—including Program Directors, faculty and trainees—licensed by the Texas Medical Board to report any licensed healthcare practitioner who may not be able to practice with reasonable skill and safety as a result of a physical or mental condition. Reporting can be done to the Program Director and or the Designated Institutional Official (DIO). All reporting will be confidential. Any reports made to the program director and/or DIO should, whenever feasible, be documented in writing. These reports should comprehensively outline all observations of the resident's behavior or conduct that the observer believes suggest intoxication or impairment.
3. PVHC expects that residents will proactively seek assistance and take ownership of their professional and personal behavior. We highly encourage residents who suspect they may be susceptible to potential impairment resulting from untreated alcohol or substance abuse, physical health issues, or mental health conditions to voluntarily come forward. They can do so by self-reporting to their program

director, seeking guidance from faculty, or by seeking treatment through the training programs assistance program or another qualified medical professional.

4. If there is reasonable suspicion that a trainee is displaying behavioral indicators suggesting untreated mental or physical illness, or the misuse or abuse of alcohol or drugs, it is mandatory to promptly report this to the Program Director. The affected trainee will then have a meeting with the Program Director, during which the allegations will be communicated.

5. Any trainee who is reasonably suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol as per the PVHC Employee Drug Use Policy may be subject to drug or alcohol testing. The Program Director or the Assigned Faculty Attending may request the trainee to provide a blood or urine sample during the initial meeting.

- a. If the suspicion is validated through positive test results, the Program Director will notify the DIO and reach out to the Committee on Physician Health and Well-Being for support in overseeing the trainee's situation. The Program Director holds the authority to decide, which may involve either discontinuing the trainee from the program or mandating the trainee to participate in a rehabilitation program. If required, reporting of the impaired physician to the Texas Medical Board shall be carried under the provision of the State of Texas.

6. Trainees who exhibit evidence of impairment, evaluation, treatment and monitoring will be performed under the guidance of the Texas Physician Health program (TPHP) or applicable physicians' health program.

- a. When a trainee is referred to the Texas Physician Health Program (TPHP) for assessment, the trainee is required to sign a release allowing the Program Director and the GME Office to receive information on the outcome of the assessment and ongoing monitoring.

7. As a condition of appointment, all trainees are required to comply with the Program Director decision to remove them from participation in clinical duties and other professional activities and to refer them to TXPHP should impairment be suspected and/or confirmed.

- a. The TXPHP is solely authorized to determine fitness for duty and endorse the return to work (i.e., the resumption of training and clinical care responsibilities) of all trainees who experience and/or exhibit signs of impairment.
- b. Project Vida Health Care Center and TXPHP support full confidentiality to the extent allowed by program policy and law.
- c. Confidentiality of evaluation, treatment and monitoring by TXPHP is assured by it being an independent and confidential program to serve physicians.
- d. However, programs are required to disclose impairment and successful return to practice, if applicable, for hospital or medical licensing board training verification and/or credentialing inquiries.

8. Conditions for reinstatement of duties following an impaired incident will be decided by the DIO and the Program Director. To resume training after a referral, a resident must be cleared to return to duty by the TXPHP or appropriate treatment program. Additionally, the resident must agree to a provisional period during which they may undergo periodic monitoring and testing.

9. The trainee will be terminated immediately for a repeated confirmed violation of Drug Free Workplace Policy. The trainee will not be provided the option to enter into a rehabilitation program for a second time.

10. Project Vida Health Care Center conducts a thorough background check on all new trainees upon appointment to residency training.

- a. If a history of DUI or other alcohol/substance abuse related crime(s) is revealed, a referral may be made to the TPHP in order to determine if ongoing evaluation, treatment and/or monitoring is required or;
- b. The program director and the DOI will determine if the trainees background check is eligible for appointment.