

POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY

SAFETY POLICY

Approved by PGME Committee: June 11, 2025

Approved by JSC: November 21, 2025

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Preamble

Postgraduate medical trainees have the right to a safe environment during their training. The responsibility for promoting a culture and environment of safety for trainees is a shared responsibility and rests with the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, affiliated hospitals and clinical training sites, faculty and supervisors, training programs and the postgraduate trainees themselves.

The learning environment must be free of learner mistreatment, harassment, or discrimination. There is zero tolerance for anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, and racism in all forms.

Applicable Policy References

- Hospital Accreditation Standards
- Legislative requirements outlined in the Ontario Health and Safety Act, Public Hospital Act, Environmental Protection Act, Nuclear Safety and Control Act and other statutes and regulations as required.
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) [Disclosure of Harm Policy](#) and [Professional Responsibilities in Medical Education Policy](#)
- [Professional Association of Residents of Ontario - Ontario Teaching Hospital \(PARO-OTH\) Collective Agreement](#)
- [PGME Fatigue Risk Management Guidelines](#)
- [PGME Principles for Redeployment of Residents and Fellows in Times of Exceptional Health System Need](#)
- [Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine \(COFM\) Immunization Policy](#)

Standards of Accreditation

General Standards of Accreditation for Institutions with Residency Programs

- Requirement 4.1.3: Residency education occurs in a safe learning environment.
- Indicator 4.1.3.2: Effective central policies and processes are in place addressing residents' physical, psychological, cultural and professional safety.
- Indicator 4.1.3.3: Central policies and processes regarding resident safety consider discipline- and program-specific contexts and allow for program-specific additions and/or variations, as appropriate.

Purpose And Scope

Safety includes physical, professional, cultural and psychological well-being.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a safe environment for residents, Royal College Area of Focused Competence (AFC) trainees and clinical fellows by outlining the responsibilities of the University, affiliated training sites, residency, AFC and fellowship training programs, and postgraduate trainees.

‘Trainee’ hereafter refers to all postgraduate learners. This policy applies while trainees are undertaking activities related to the execution of their clinical and program duties.

This policy is guided by, and should be used in conjunction with, relevant policies and procedures from accrediting bodies, the [PARO-OTH Collective Agreement](#), affiliation agreements with clinical sites, and policies governing professional practice as outlined by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO).

The Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME), and Program and Fellowship Directors have the authority to remove trainees from clinical placements if there are real or perceived immediate threats to personal safety pending investigation and resolution of safety concerns. If trainees are removed from a clinical placement the appropriate hospital and University leadership must be informed as soon as possible.

Each residency and AFC program should develop a [discipline specific safety policy\(ies\)](#) in accordance with the [General Standards for Accreditation of Residency Programs](#) or the [General Standards of Accreditation of AFC Programs](#). Alternatively, programs may regularly review and adopt the PMGE Safety Policy and create discipline specific addendums as required.

General Principles

The trainee must:

- Participate in workplace safety training and orientation sessions as required by the program and clinical teaching site.
- Comply with workplace safety policies and procedures including use of personal protective equipment and radiation protective garments and comply with the [PARO-OTH Collective Agreement](#) requirements with respect to personal safety.
- Be up to date on required immunizations.
- Communicate any safety concerns for themselves or patients to their supervisor, program, hospital administrator, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry Learner Experience Office, [Western Human Rights Office](#) or PGME. Hospital documentation of safety concerns may be made using the online reporting system (e.g., SPEAK system at London Health Sciences Centre; Workplace Occurrence Report (WORS) at St. Joseph’s Healthcare London; Safety Reporting System, Windsor).
- Exercise judgment with respect to workplace risks, including travel to and from the workplace. The [Safe Ride Home Program](#) is free and available 24/7 for residents.

The program must:

- Provide a specialty and site-specific orientation for trainees, and ensure they are aware of relevant policies before beginning clinical duties.
- Provide a safe environment for trainees to report safety concerns and promote a culture of safety.
- React promptly to address safety concerns.

The PGME Office must:

- Collaborate with affiliated teaching sites and postgraduate training programs to ensure systemic safety issues are recognized and addressed.
- Collaborate with Occupational Health and Safety offices at affiliated teaching sites to ensure timely and equitable access for trainees.
- Provide educational materials and resources for programs with respect to patient safety and quality improvement, professionalism, discrimination, and anti-racism.

Affiliated teaching sites must:

- Ensure appropriate safety, supervision, and security of trainees in compliance with existing policies, procedures, and regulatory requirements.
- Ensure that trainees are provided training with respect to policies and procedures for reporting adverse events and safety concerns, including trainee and patient safety.
- Comply with the requirements for teaching sites outlined in the PARO-OTH Collective Agreement and affiliation agreement ([PARO-OTH: Facilities](#); [PARO-OTH: Health & Safety](#)).
- Notify PGME and/or program leadership regarding safety issues affecting trainees and collaborate to identify solutions.
- Ensure that Occupational Health and Safety procedures are available and that there is timely access for work-place related injuries or infectious disease exposures.

Reporting Protocols

- Postgraduate trainees have many reporting options depending on the situation:
 - Immediate supervisor or rotation/site, clinical lead, or program wellness lead
 - Program or Fellowship director
 - [Schulich Medicine and Dentistry Learner Experience Office](#)
 - Hospital reporting system (e.g., SPEAK, WORS, Safety Reporting System)
 - [Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education](#)
 - [Western University Human Rights Office](#)
 - [Western University Student Wellness](#)
 - [Professional Association of Residents of Ontario Helpline](#)
 - [Western University Black and Racialized Student Support Group](#)
 - [LGBTTIQSA+ Western University Counselling and Resources](#)
 - [Western University Indigenous Student Centre](#)
- For work-based injury or infectious disease exposure trainees must complete a hospital incident form. If the safety incident is in a community or non-hospital-based setting trainees must notify their immediate supervisor and Program or Fellowship Director.



- Adverse events, critical incidents, or patient care or safety concerns must be reported through the hospital adverse event reporting system as per hospital policy. For patient safety incidents in the community or non-hospital-based setting trainees must notify their immediate supervisor or program or fellowship director.
- Trainees who feel their personal safety or security is threatened should remove themselves from the situation and seek immediate assistance from their supervisor or security services.
- Trainees must be protected from any negative impact as a result of reporting of safety concerns.
- Trainees cannot be negatively impacted for refusing to engage in clinical or educational experiences if they truly feel at risk in doing so and have communicated this to their program or fellowship directors. It is recognized however that there are times (for example, in outbreaks of infectious disease), when a residual risk will remain after all known precautions are taken. Professional responsibility to patients may require engaging in care despite these risks.
- Pregnant trainees should be aware of specific risks to themselves and their fetus in the training environment; accommodations based on their treating physician's advice may be requested through Learner Experience. The [PARO-OTH Collective Agreement](#) provides modified call requirements for residents during pregnancy.
- Trainees with underlying medical conditions should be aware of specific risks to themselves in the training environment; accommodations based on their treating physician's advice may be requested through Learner Experience.

Physical Safety and Security

Travel

- Trainees are responsible for making appropriate arrangements for travel to clinical or other academic assignments and not travel in unsafe conditions. If circumstances give rise to travel safety concerns (e.g., weather conditions, rotation scheduling or on call scheduling), it is the trainee's responsibility to notify their program administrator and/or supervisor (or as per program-specific policies and procedures).
- Trainees must not be required to travel in unsafe conditions.
- If travel between sites for clinical placements is more than 250 km the trainee must be provided with one day of travel time between sites. Trainees must not be required to travel long distances post-call.
- Training outside of Canada requires the approval of the program director. Electives outside of Canada require the appropriate liability coverage, this must be arranged by the trainee with the accepting institution. Travel advisories must be checked prior to travel; if a travel advisory is noted, risks should be reviewed with the program director and the PGME Office before departure. Overseas travel immunizations must be sought well in advance of the start of overseas electives.

After-hours work and on-call work

- As part of their orientation to a new site, trainees should be made aware of site-specific security services.
- Trainees are not expected to work alone at after-hours clinics.
- Trainees are not expected to make unaccompanied home visits.
- Trainees should only telephone patients from a clinic or hospital telephone line. If calls must be made with a personal or mobile phone, this should be done using call blocking.

Workplace violence

- Programs must provide special training to residents who are expected to encounter aggressive patients. Trainees should not assess aggressive or violent patients without adequate training, space, security backup and awareness of accessible exits.
- Physical space requirements for management of violent patients must be provided where appropriate.

Occupational and environmental safety

- Trainees should familiarize themselves with the location and services offered by the relevant Occupational Health and Safety Office. This includes familiarity with policies and procedures for infection control and protocols following exposure to contaminated fluids, needle stick injuries, and reportable infectious diseases.
- Trainees working in areas of high and long-term exposure to radiation must follow radiation safety policies, including use of protective garments and radiation badges, and minimize their exposure according to current guidelines.

Professional

- Trainees must be members of the [Canadian Medical Protective Association \(CMPA\)](#) with the appropriate Type of Work (TOW) coverage. They must follow CMPA recommendations in the event of complaints or threatened or anticipated legal action. CMPA coverage is only applicable to clinical services provided in Canada.
- Programs and hospitals/training sites must promote a safe learning environment, in which trainees feel comfortable reporting and discussing adverse events, critical incidents, and patient safety concerns without fear of reprisal. Patient safety education and training must be included in the educational program.
- Trainee assessment data must remain confidential in accordance with PGME's Assessment Data Security Policy.

Psychological Safety

- Trainees should be provided access to available supports, both immediate and long-term, for psychological challenges, substance abuse, harassment and/or discrimination and equity issues.
- Confidential supports available to trainees include the Learner Experience Office, PARO, and the Physician Health Program.

Cultural Safety

- All trainees have a right to work in an environment free of discrimination and harassment. The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination or harassment based on age, gender, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.
- If a trainee experiences any tension between their ethical, cultural, or religious beliefs and the training requirements or professional obligations, they should contact the Learner Experience Office for support in dealing with these conflicts.

Resources

- [Schulich Medicine and Dentistry Learner Experience Office](#)
- [Western University Health and Wellness](#)
- [Western Human Rights Office](#)
- [Western Office of the Ombudsperson](#)
- [Professional Association of Residents of Ontario Helpline](#)
- [Ontario Medical Association Physician Health Program](#)
- [Black and Racialized Student Supports](#)
- [LGBTTIQQA+ Western University Support and Resources](#)
- [Indigenous Student Supports and Wampum Learning Lodge](#)
- [Safe Ride Home Program](#)
- [Professional Association of Residents of Ontario - Ontario Teaching Hospital \(PARO-OTH\) Collective Agreement](#)
- [Professional Association of Residents of Ontario: \[paro@paroteam.ca\]\(mailto:paro@paroteam.ca\); 416-979-1182](#)