

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER
DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

Policy on Resident Fatigue and/or Stress

June 2011

Purpose

In patient care settings, patient safety, as well as the personal safety and well-being of the resident, mandates implementation of an immediate and proper response sequence. Resident excess fatigue and/or stress may occur in patient care settings or in non-patient care settings. In non-patient care settings, responses may vary depending on the severity of and the demeanor of the resident's appearance and perceived condition. The following is intended as guidelines for recognizing and observing excessive resident fatigue and or stress in non-patient care and patient care settings.

All residents will be trained on stress, fatigue, and burnout at least annually. Any release from duty assignments due to stress/fatigue that exceed the requirements for completion of training must be made up in order to meet RRC curriculum guidelines.

Attending Clinician/Supervising Resident Responsibility

- If attending clinician or supervising resident recognize a resident is demonstrating evidence for excess fatigue and/or stress, the attending should consider immediate release of the resident from any further patient care responsibilities.
- The attending faculty or supervising resident should privately discuss with the resident the possible causes of stress/fatigue in order to identify ways to reduce resident's fatigue/stress.
- The attending clinician must immediately attempt to notify the chief resident and program director of the decision to release the resident from further duties.
- Once attending recognizes a resident exhibiting excess fatigue, the attending must advise the resident to rest for at least a 30-minute period before operating a motorized vehicle. The resident should be encouraged to rest in a call-room, or calling someone to provide transportation back home.
- After private counseling of a resident under excess stress, if the attending believes the resident's stress may negatively affect patient safety, the attending must immediately release the resident of further duties at that time. Upon the resident's release from patient care duties, the attending must notify the chief resident and program director.
- A resident who is released from further patient care duties due to stress or fatigue cannot appeal the decision of the responding attending.
- A resident who is released from further patient care duties due to stress or fatigue cannot resume patient care duties without permission of the program director.

Resident Responsibility

- Residents who perceive they are manifesting excess fatigue and/or stress have the professional liability to immediately notify their attending faculty, the chief resident, and program director without fear of reprisal.
- Residents who recognize a peer resident exhibiting excess fatigue and/or stress must immediately report their observations and concerns to the attending physician, the chief resident, or program director.

Program Director Responsibility

- Upon removal of a resident from duties in coordination with the chief resident, the program director must determine the need for immediate change in duty assignments for peer residents in the program.
- The program director will review the call schedule, duty hours, patient care responsibilities, and investigate resident personal issues that may contribute to the manifestation of stress/fatigue on the resident.
- The program director will notify the departmental chair/rotation director to discuss methods to reduce resident fatigue.
- The program director will meet with the resident in person. If counseling by the program director is judged to be inadequate, the resident will be referred to the Resident Assistance Program by direct contact with the RAP service.
- If the problem is recurrent or not resolved after two consecutive rotations, the program director will have the authority to release the resident indefinitely from patient care duties (due to academic deficiency) pending evaluation from the RAP representative.
- The program director will release the resident to resume patient care duties only after consultation from the RAP director and will be responsible for informing both the resident and attending clinician of the current rotation.
- If the resident is advised to continue counseling, the program director will be notified and will receive periodic updates from the RAP representative on the resident's progress.