



Policy: Resident and Fellow Wellness Days

Effective: July 1, 2017

Applies to: Residents/Fellows at Mount Sinai Beth Israel; Mount Sinai Hospital; New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai; Queens Hospital Center; Mount Sinai St. Luke's and West (non-Union); Elmhurst Hospital Center (non-Union)

To allow residents and fellows to attend to their personal health and wellness, including medical, dental, and mental health appointments, annually (academic year) residents and fellows will be provided with four (4) wellness days in addition to other leave time (including sick and vacation leave). This is provided and structured with the goal of minimizing disruptions to both patient care and training, while allowing residents and fellows sufficient protected time for appropriate personal health maintenance and wellness.

In addition to using this time for personal health maintenance, wellness days may also be used for the following:

- To care for the child of a resident/fellow who has a health condition requiring treatment or supervision.
- To care for an ill family member (parent, spouse, or child) or partner, including medical, dental, and mental health appointments where the resident/fellow's presence is needed.

In acknowledgment that many appointments do not require an entire duty period to be taken off, the four (4) days may be used in half-day (4-hour) increments to allow residents/fellows to perform normal duties before and/or after the appointment.

Departments will be required to make every effort to accommodate residents and fellows using a wellness day during scheduled duties and are asked to establish policies and procedures for usage of this time:

- Departments will be asked to track this leave time separate from sick and vacation time, but may not require that residents/fellows provide documentation of appointments.
- Prior to using a wellness day (or portion of a day), advance notice of at least 7 days wherever practicable should be provided to the resident's/fellow's Program Director or designee to ensure adequate coverage. Residents/fellows and programs are encouraged to ensure that the supervising faculty service attending is made aware as well.
- Programs are encouraged to implement a system of coverage to ensure that use of wellness days does not produce an undue burden on other residents and faculty and minimizes disruptions to patient care and resident/fellow learning.
- Residents/fellows are encouraged wherever possible to schedule appointments when not assigned to clinical duties, but should not be penalized by programs for use of a wellness day.
- Residents/fellows may be asked to provide alternate days/times for use of wellness days where appropriate to accommodate the needs of the program

Unlike sick leave, wellness days are earned quarterly (one wellness day per quarter); may not be accrued (must be used in the quarter in which they are earned) or carried over to subsequent training years; and may not be used to extend any other type of leave (vacation; sick or FMLA; conference/educational).

When using wellness days residents/fellows should be aware of the attendance requirements for eligibility for Specialty Board examinations with reference to minimal, contiguous time that must be spent in a training program.

Intent: The provision of wellness days is in keeping with the section on Well-Being found in the ACGME's Common Program Requirements Section VI, including that resident/fellow health and well-being be optimized and that residents/fellows be given the opportunity to attend medical, dental, and mental health appointments during working hours and not have restrictions on when these can be scheduled.

Wellness Days FAQ for Residency and Fellowship Programs

How many wellness days do residents/fellows receive?

Each quarter, residents/fellows will be entitled to a single wellness day, which unless otherwise approved by the program director should only be used during that quarter and may not be carried over to subsequent quarters, to a maximum of four (4) per academic year. Programs may allow residents/fellows to use wellness days in half-day (4-hour) increments (2 half days per quarter).

How are programs expected to track wellness days?

It is expected that program coordinators will track wellness days internally as they do for sick, vacation, and other leave time. A *wellness day* duty type will be established in New Innovations to allow for use in duty hour reporting.

Are programs allowed any flexibility in the application of Wellness Days based on the policy outlined above?

Recognizing that we have a wide-variety of programs in terms of size, scheduling systems, and coverage demands, programs will be allowed flexibility as long as policies and procedures are applied consistently. Examples of this would include allowing a resident/fellow to carry over a wellness day to another quarter if scheduling issues force them to move a scheduled appointment or allowing programs the latitude to use wellness days for wellness activities that may fall outside the scope of medical, dental and mental health appointments that they feel are appropriate.

May residents/fellows use wellness days as “free” days?

No, wellness days may not be used as “free” days and as stated in the policy, they may not be used to extend any other type of leave, including adding them to vacation time.

Are programs allowed to opt out of this policy?

Programs may not opt out of the policy. Program Directors are encouraged to meet with their residents/fellows to review the policy guidelines and to address the coverage issues that may result from the introduction of the policy and usage of wellness days. The ACGME Common Program Requirements now mandate that residents/fellows be allowed to attend medical, dental and mental health appointments and the Wellness Days policy was established with the intent that programs would make reasonable accommodation of such requests.

Who should programs contact with questions related to the Wellness Days Policy?

Please contact Frank Basloe for any questions related to the policy and usage of wellness days.