

## PROCEDURE GME 32

**Subject:** CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR  
FACULTY AND MEDICAL STAFF

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**  
July 1, 2016

**Applies to:**  
HOUSTON METHODIST HOSPITAL SYSTEM—GME

**Date Revised:**  
DECEMBER 2023

**Originating Area:**  
GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**Target Review Date:**  
DECEMBER 2026

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### **I. GENERAL STATEMENT**

Houston Methodist Hospital is committed to providing unparalleled quality, safety, service, and medical education training of both graduate and undergraduate learners. This commitment also extends to ensuring that the educational environment is one in which faculty teachers and clinical supervisors display professionalism and respect for all learners.

The office of Graduate Medical Education (GME) maintains responsibility for ensuring that members of the training community are civil and respectful towards all Residents regardless of individual differences. The office of GME wholly supports the mission of Houston Methodist and strives to foster an institution free of behaviors that damage the academic and clinical training mission of the hospital.

Houston Methodist has in place policies, standards of conduct and procedures that govern the relationships between the Hospital, medical staff, and members of the community. Consistent with these institutional policies, the purpose of this Code of Conduct is to transparently establish the institution's expectations for the professional conduct of its faculty when functioning in the clinical learning environment. This Code is intended to be consistent with and augment existing Houston Methodist policies, rather than to replace any pre-existing policies or procedures.

### **II. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

All HMH teaching faculty and attending staff interacting with Residents in the context of patient care or functioning in a supervisory role with Residents are charged with conducting these interactions according to a code of professional conduct consistent with the HMH ICARE values, Section 8.7 of the Bylaws of the Medical Staff, the HMH Human Resources conduct policy, HR87, and the code of professional conduct for faculty and medical staff educators as outlined below. All employees are subject to HR01, Managing for Performance regarding conduct and performance.

- A) The guiding principle of professional behavior in interactions with Residents is the absolute requirement of dignity and respect for other persons. Unprofessional interpersonal behavior and/or behavior that is disrespectful of others interferes with the effectiveness and safety of both the working and learning environment and will not be tolerated.
- B) The optimal teacher-learner relationship is predicated on demonstration of honesty, civility, and fairness.

- C) Residents of all levels of training should be guaranteed an environment free of bias based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, medical condition, ancestry or genetics, status with regard to citizenship, marital status, or status as a Vietnam or special disabled veteran.
- D) Faculty and staff should provide Residents clear direction and timely feedback, as well as constructive suggestions and opportunities for improvement or remediation when needed. Conflict resolution and counseling of Residents should be conducted in a non-threatening and constructive manner. If concerns arise regarding the underperformance of a Resident, teaching faculty should contact the program leadership for assistance.
- E) Residents should be guaranteed an environment free of unwanted physical contact, threats of such contact, sexual harassment, verbal threats, intimidation, and demeaning behavior (both real or perceived.)
- F) Faculty should familiarize themselves with and follow Houston Methodist institutional policies and procedures applicable to their work and require those reporting to them to do the same.
- G) Professional behavior in accordance with ICARE values is also expected of Residents as they assume teaching responsibilities.

### **III. PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGATIONS OF TRAINEE MISTREATMENT**

- A) Mechanisms for reporting violations of the code of professional conduct are provided to and acknowledged by Residents, including visiting Residents, to ensure that any violations can be registered and investigated without fear of retaliation. Residents may contact the GME Office or may submit a confidential report through the GME website <https://www.houstonmethodist.org/education/medical/graduate-medical-education/>.
- B) If a formal complaint is made to the GME Office by a Resident or another individual on behalf of a Resident, the DIO will initiate a meeting between GME administrative leadership and the respective program director to review the complaint. A temporary suspension of teaching activities within the program may be invoked by the program director, DIO or department chair, with such suspension continuing until the investigation is complete. If the allegations of mistreatment are founded, a plan to avoid a recurrence of these actions will be outlined and implemented. The written plan will be acknowledged by signatures of the faculty member and program director.
- C) Notwithstanding the above, the program director, pursuant to ACGME requirements, has the authority to immediately remove program faculty from participation in the residency program education at any site. Further, the DIO may

at any time intervene in a situation and take any necessary action to ensure that all Residents are treated with respect and dignity.

- D) Failure by a program to adequately address complaints, or repeat incidents with the same faculty member will result in a Special Review of the program as set forth in GME 20 – Internal and Special Reviews.
- E) Formal complaints made to the GME Office by a medical student or another individual on behalf of a medical student will be forwarded to the Vice President for Education Administration for review and follow-up. Further, Texas A&M Medical Students have specific processes in place for reporting mistreatment.
- F) Throughout the processes described above, attempts to maintain learner anonymity will be made.

**IV. ONGOING EDUCATION AND EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AN OPTIMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

- A) Departmental and GME-level Faculty development and education on professionalism, emotional intelligence, and burnout will be available.
- B) Information and acknowledgement of the Houston Methodist Resident ombudsman program will be distributed to Residents and faculty.
- C) Optimal Learning Environment subcommittee within the GMEC Wellness In Training subcommittee will be created on an ad hoc basis.
- D) GME will periodically evaluate the learning environment by several methods, including conducting a rigorous audit of ACGME and GME Survey results, encouraging ongoing participation by Residents appointed to the GMEC Wellness in Training subcommittee, and by reviewing routine reporting by the appointed ombudsmen.

**V. FACULTY WITH MEDICAL STAFF APPOINTMENTS**

- A) Faculty who are not employed by Houston Methodist or its entities, yet maintain active medical staff appointments are reminded that their conduct is also governed by the policies and procedures of Houston Methodist Medical Staff Bylaws in their relationship with Residents within the hospital. Conduct or behavior that violates these policies may also constitute a violation of applicable hospital policies for which disciplinary action may also be taken under the applicable Medical Staff Bylaws.

**VI. COMMITTEE REVIEWING OR APPROVING PROCEDURE**

- A) Graduate Medical Education Committee [14 July 2016] [14 November 2019 ] [13 December 2023]