Vanderbilt Med-Peds Leave Policy  
(Updated September 27, 2018)

The Vanderbilt Med-Peds Program’s Leave Policy follows the Vanderbilt University Medical Centers Housestaff Manual Policy, and also follows the requirements of the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Pediatrics requirements for successful completion of training. All three policies are reviewed below with a composite statement complying with all three entities written as a conclusion.

The following is taken directly from the Vanderbilt University Medical Center Housestaff Manual 2018-19, Section M: Holiday/Vacation/Sick Time:

M. HOLIDAY/VACATION/SICK TIME
The amount of time a resident can be away from residency duties and still meet Board requirements varies among the specialties. It is the resident’s responsibility to be aware of his/her specialty requirement. Time under any of the following may not be counted toward Board eligibility.

1. Holidays
   All time off, including holidays, is scheduled at the discretion of the Program Director. Official Vanderbilt University Medical Center holidays are not automatically observed as time off for house staff.

2. Vacation
   All house staff on one year appointments are eligible for three weeks of vacation upon their start date. For appointments less than one year, vacation will be prorated accordingly. House staff must schedule vacation days with the Program Director. Vacation time must be used in the appointment year in which it is accrued. Any unused time does not carry over and is not paid out at the appointment yearend.

3. Sick Time
   Time off due to illness must be reported to the Program Director at the time of the illness. House officers accrue paid sick time at the rate of one day per month except when he/she is on unpaid leave. House officers on unpaid leave do not accrue sick time. House officers are not paid for unused sick time. If a house officer is reappointed and has unused and accrued sick time, that unused and accrued sick time will carry over to the next appointment year. Sick time can only be used for time off due to the resident’s illness or the illness of an eligible family member. For the purpose of this policy, eligible family members are defined as: spouse, domestic partner, parent, grandparent, sibling, biological child, stepchild, adopted child, foster child and child (ren) of the staff member. Sick time must be utilized prior to going into unpaid status, if available. If the resident wants to continue receiving full salary for time off due to an injury or occupational disease which is compensable under the
Tennessee Workers’ Compensation Act, workers’ compensation benefits may be supplemented by available sick or vacation time up to the resident’s full weekly salary.

Revisions approved by GMEC: 6/11/2010

The following is taken directly from the Vanderbilt University Medical Center Housestaff Manual 2018-19, Section N: Leave Policy

N. LEAVE POLICY

VUMC recognizes that a resident may need to be away from work due to medical or certain family reasons. Leaves of absence are defined as approved time away from residency duties, other than regularly scheduled days off as reflected in a rotation schedule. All leaves will be scheduled with prior approval by the Program Director or Chief of Service, with the exception of family emergencies or unexpected illnesses. In unexpected/emergency situations, the resident should contact the Program Director or Chief of Service at the earliest possible time.

Each residency or fellowship program will provide its house officers with a written policy in compliance with its Program Requirements concerning the effect of leaves of absence, for any reason, on satisfying the criteria for completion of that residency or fellowship program.

The amount of time a resident can be away from residency duties and still meet Board requirements varies among the specialties. It is the resident’s responsibility to be aware of his/her specialty requirement. Information relating to access to eligibility for certification by the relevant certifying board is available upon request from the Program Director. If leave time is taken beyond what is allowable for the specialty board and the resident is required to extend his/her period of activity in the training program to meet board requirements, the resident should request permission to extend and should establish a schedule for doing so in consultation with the Program Director.

Leave time under any of these categories will not be credited as time toward Board eligibility. When the need/request for leave is foreseeable, the request should be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to the leave. When the need for the leave is unforeseeable or the thirty days’ notice cannot be given, the request should be submitted as soon as practical.

In order to remain in a paid status during leave, the house staff member will utilize sick time first for a leave related to his/her (or a qualifying family member’s) medical condition, then vacation time, then will be placed on unpaid leave once all available paid leave time has been exhausted.

House officers on medical leave MUST obtain a Return to Work/Physician Release form and return it to Occupational Health who will notify the Program Director or his/her designee
BEFORE the resident may return to work. If the resident is released with restrictions that affect his/her duties, the resident should contact the Graduate Medical Education office. In addition, if the restrictions may necessitate an accommodation, the resident should make the GME Office aware of the request for accommodation and may also need to engage VUMC Employee Relations.

1. Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Tennessee Maternity (Parental) Leave Act (TMLA)
Consistent with the FMLA, eligible house officers are able to take up to 12 weeks of leave (leave related to a serious injury in active military duty can be longer as set out below) for certain personal medical reasons or for qualifying family reasons. House officers are eligible if they have worked at least 12 months and have had at least 1250 hours of work in the preceding 12 months from the date FMLA is to be used.

Leave under FMLA or TMLA may be either paid or unpaid. Sick and vacation time must be used before a resident goes into unpaid status; for a medical condition, the department will use available sick leave first, then vacation time. Health insurance is maintained throughout the leave period, but if the resident is in unpaid status she/he must continue to pay her/his share of the cost and can obtain information through the Benefits office on where to direct payments.

A resident uses FMLA and/or TMLA leave (if available based on eligibility and prior usage) for the following:

- The birth of a son or daughter or placement of a son or daughter with the resident for adoption or foster care;
- To care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- For a serious health condition that makes the resident unable to perform the essential functions of his/her duties;
- For any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that a spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a military member on covered active duty or call to covered active duty status; or
- To care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness, when the resident is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the servicemember. This type of leave (military caregiver leave) may be for up to 26 workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period.

Note that special rules apply if a resident and spouse are both residents or if the spouse is employed by VUMC.

As well as taking FMLA in continuous blocks, for medical conditions, a resident may be entitled to intermittent leave for treatment, appointments, or episodic conditions, for her/himself or for care of a qualifying family member.
The FMLA process is located here:  

In the event of a serious medical condition with a same-sex domestic partner or in the event of a serious medical condition with a same-sex domestic partner or the partner’s child, Vanderbilt University Medical Center has chosen to extend the same protections provided by the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Tennessee 35 Maternity Leave Act. For questions regarding these leave policies contact the Administrative Director of GME.

Parental Leave/Adoption Parental leave is available to all (male and female) eligible house officers for the birth or adoption of a child under the FMLA and the Tennessee Maternity (Parental) Leave Act (TMLA). If certain conditions are met, a resident may be eligible for parental (or other) leave related to adoption, pregnancy, childbirth, and/or nursing an infant for a period of up to 16 weeks under the TMLA. Time off taken under the TMLA and the FMLA runs concurrently. Please see above section on FMLA/TMLA for more information.

If paid sick or vacation time is available, sick, then vacation time must be used prior to going into unpaid status. Contact the Office of GME for more information about qualifying conditions and the provisions for parental leave under these laws. For care of a newly adopted child, available vacation and then unpaid leave is used.

2. Medical Leave
Medical leave which is not FMLA/TMLA eligible or which is requested after FMLA/TMLA leave is exhausted may be available at the discretion of the Program Director. For an increment of greater than 30-days, the resident should also contact the GME Administrative Director. Medical documentation is required if the resident is away from work for more than 5 calendar days. House officers will be required to exhaust other forms of leave for which they may qualify prior to being eligible for medical leave. If paid sick or vacation time is available, it must be used prior to going into unpaid status.

NOTE: If a resident is not medically released to return after their FMLA or other medical leave, or has restrictions which impact their ability to perform their duties, additional leave or other accommodations may be requested as an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act through VUMC Employee Relations. Contact Employee Relations for questions regarding accommodations.

3. Education Leave
Education leave may be granted at the discretion of the Program Director.

4. Military Leave/Jury Duty
House officers will be granted military leave or leave for jury duty as required by applicable law. Please contact the Office of GME for specific questions about such leave.
5. Personal Leave
If a resident does not qualify for FMLA, TMLA, or medical leave, they may be allowed to take personal leave. The Program Director in consultation with the ACGME Designated Institutional Official may approve personal leave in up to 30-day intervals according to the policies established by the individual residency programs. House officers will be required to exhaust other forms of leave for which they may qualify prior to being eligible for personal leave.

6. Bereavement Leave
If there is a death in a house officer’s family, he or she may take up to three working days off as leave with pay. For this purpose, "family" is defined as spouse, domestic partner, child, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister, brother, grandparent or grandchild. Except in very unusual circumstances, bereavement leave must be utilized within 14 days of the date of death.

7. Administrative Leave
Administrative leave is a general leave status, initiated by the Program Director or the ACGME Designated Institutional Official, which is paid. Examples of when a House Staff member may be placed on administrative leave include, but are not limited to: an internal review or investigation, or for an investigation of an external event, such as an arrest. Program Directors consult with the ACGME Designated Institutional Official before placing an individual on leave to determine the appropriate type of leave and to coordinate the appropriate payroll processing information.


The following are the statements from the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Pediatrics defining the amount of time away from training allowed to successful complete training to become board-eligible in each specialty.

American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM)
Policy on Leave of Absence and Vacation (published August 2018)

Up to one month per academic year is permitted for time away from training, which includes vacation, illness, parental or family leave, or pregnancy-related disabilities. Training must be extended to make up any absences exceeding one month per year of training unless the Deficits in Required Training Time policy is used and approved. Vacation leave is essential and should not be forfeited or postponed in any year of training and cannot be used to reduce the total required training period. ABIM recognizes that leave policies vary from institution to institution.
and expects the program director to apply his/her local requirements within these guidelines to ensure trainees have completed the requisite period of training.

ABIM views educational leave, which would include attendance at training related seminars, courses, interviews for subsequent training positions, etc. as bona fide educational experiences or duties essential for the continuity of education from internal medicine to a subspecialty and, therefore, need not be counted as part of the one month allocation for leave time in the academic year for purposes of tracking training time for ABIM.

American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) Policy on Absences from training:
Absences from Residency Training (published January 2018)
https://www.abp.org/content/general-pediatrics-training-irregularities#absences

In order to meet the training requirements to apply for certification by the ABP, an individual must train in an accredited program, and the program director must certify that the individual has met the training requirements. The duration of general pediatrics training is 36 months. Thirty–three months of clinical training are required. One month of absence is allowed each year for leave (eg, vacation, sick, parental leave). Absences greater than 3 months during the 3 years of residency should be made up by additional periods of training. If the program director believes that the candidate is well qualified and has met all the training requirements, the program director may submit a petition to the ABP requesting an exemption to the policy. Residents in combined training or special training pathways may not take more than 1 month of leave per year.

Vanderbilt Med-Peds Program's Composite leave statement as it effects training requirements:
More than one month (or 4 weeks) absence in any year of training, or more than four months (or 16 weeks) over the 48 months of training, will require make-up training time past the standard 48 month med-peds combined training program in order to be board-eligible in either internal medicine or pediatrics. Specifics should be discussed with the program director in detail.

(Web page updated September 2018)