

Medical College of Wisconsin
General Surgery Residency
Pregnancy and Parental Wellness Guide
Last revision date: December 1, 2023

1) PURPOSE

The Department of Surgery recognizes that surgical training is long, stressful, physically strenuous, and often occurs during childbearing and family forming years. The Department supports residents who start or grow their families during their residency, whether as birthing parent, non-birthing parent, or through adoption, fostering, or surrogacy. The Department encourages residents to request any related accommodation, medical leave, and/or parental leave requests. This guide helps identify resources, existing policies, procedures, and examples of potential accommodations to assist residents through this process. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Program Director and/or the MCWAH Office, specifically the MCWAH Benefits Coordinator for Leave of Absence information and MCWAH's Director of Risk Management for accommodation requests.

2) NEW PARENT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

All expecting parents (birthing, non-birthing, through adoption, fostering, and/or surrogacy) will be given the opportunity to match with a faculty member who will provide them with mentorship and support as part of a New Parent Mentorship Program. The Program is voluntary.

3) PRE- AND POSTNATAL HEALTH/ ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

Pregnant and birthing parents may be eligible for reasonable accommodation and/or medical leave related to pregnancy and/or childbirth pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Pregnant Workers' Fairness Act, the Wisconsin and federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and applicable state laws. Please see the MCWAH's Accommodation for Disabilities Policy, and FMLA Policy for further information. Pregnant residents who need accommodations are encouraged to disclose their pregnancy as soon as they are comfortable to the Program Director to facilitate accommodations. Requests for accommodations should be made in accordance with MCWAH's Accommodation for Disabilities Policy except as noted in the last paragraph of this section which addresses obvious accommodations for pregnancy and childbirth. Consistent with MCWAH policies, you may be required to provide medical documentation in support of accommodation and/or leave requests. All medical information will be kept confidential on a need-to-know basis only and separate from resident's personnel files.

Reasonable accommodations for pregnancy and childbirth may include the following examples. These are examples only and do not represent a full list of possible accommodations.

- Time off to attend prenatal appointments.
- Time off to attend post-natal appointments.
- Time off and/or breaks related to pregnancy symptoms (e.g., morning sickness) and/or childbirth-related conditions that render the resident unable to work.
- Breaks to eat or drink.
- Leave to recover from childbirth.

- Adjustments to rotations and/or procedures to avoid or minimize potential exposure to higher radiation (e.g., vascular and/or trauma surgery rotation, endovascular cases and trauma). The Department also provides fetal radiation badges to pregnant residents.
- Temporarily reducing and/or eliminating overnight and/or long shifts when medically required or recommended.

The Department is committed to supporting residents' peri and postpartum mental health and encourages residents experiencing to seek treatment and attend relevant appointments.

When possible, please provide 30 days' advance notice, or longer if able, of appointments and/or treatment related to pregnancy and/or childbirth. For urgent scenarios, please notify the Program Director so that the program can ensure proper patient coverage. For birthing parents who may need rest breaks, residents should discuss planned and/or anticipated breaks related to pregnancy and/or childbirth with the attending physician prior to the case to allow for optimal timing, when possible.

The Department permits obvious and non-disruptive accommodations associated with pregnancy and childbirth, such as more frequent restroom breaks, short breaks to sit down or get a snack/ drink of water. Residents do not need to make formal accommodation requests for these types of obvious accommodations but should make their attending is aware of these so appropriate plans can be made to ensure continuity of care.

4) LACTATION BREAKS

Residents may take reasonable lactation breaks. Residents should notify the attending physician about their need to take breaks and the planned schedule for such breaks prior to each rotation. While residents are free to share the reason for needed breaks, if they are more comfortable sharing with residents that they need to schedule "approved breaks," they may do so. Lactating residents should contact the Program Director if they are having any difficulties in lactation break scheduling and should contact MCWAH's Director of Risk Management if that does not rectify the situation.

When operating, residents are permitted to scrub out of cases for lactation breaks. Ideally these plans should be discussed prior to the operation with the attending so appropriate plans can be made. If pumping has to take place between cases, the attending should be notified so the service can help facilitate, including other residents, APPs and/or faculty to help with writing orders and prepping the next operative patient as needed.

Residents may take lactation breaks in call rooms and team rooms if so desired. A listing of lactation resources and rooms at various MCWAH training sites can be found on MCWAH/GME Intranet < Housestaff Resources < Lactation Resources.

Information Regarding Requesting Lactation Breaks during Third Party Testing:

- ABSITE - Lactating residents who wish for additional time on the ABS Inservice Training Exam (ABSITE) for lactation breaks should contact the Program Director and Program Coordinator to arrange for extended time. We suggest this be done, no later than **December 15th** of the same academic year to ensure time for processing the request.

- ii. ABS Board Examinations - Lactating residents wishing for additional time for lactation breaks during the ABS Board exams can submit the [Lactating Mothers Accommodations Request Form](#) to accommodations@absurgery.org (Note: this must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the exam date, AND must be approved prior to scheduling an exam center, per the ABS policies listed on their website [here](#)).

5) BEREAVEMENT

If a resident or their partner suffers a miscarriage, stillbirth, or loss of a child, the resident should feel empowered to use their sick and/or vacation days needed for recovery and/or bereavement under MCWAH's Bereavement policy. Employees may request additional unpaid time off, subject to MCWAH's approval. If you need further support, MCWAH's Resident Mental Health Program is available to all MCWAH Housestaff and their family. Additional information about this program can be found on MCWAH/GME Intranet < Housestaff Resources < Resident/Fellow Mental Health Program and Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

6) SUPPORT FOR ALL PARENTS

Non-birthing residents are encouraged to attend prenatal appointments, delivery, hospitalization, and pediatric appointments.

Residents who themselves or whose significant others are undergoing fertility treatments, such as egg preservation, in vitro fertilization, or intrauterine insemination, may request time off and will be supported in their necessary appointments. These appointment needs should be discussed with the Program Director to determine service coverage, planned absences, and leave needs, etc. For any and all time off covered by FMLA leave, such residents should refer to and follow the requirements of MCWAH's FMLA policy.

Housestaff should provide notice of appointments as outlined in the Pre- and Post-Natal Health section above.

7) PARENTAL LEAVE

All resident parents may take parental leave for the birth or placement of a child. Residents who are eligible for FMLA must request parental leave pursuant to and consistent with MCWAH's FMLA Leave policy. Residents who do not meet FMLA eligibility requirements may request parental leave pursuant to MCWAH's Non-FMLA Medical [and Family] Leave policy. It is helpful for Residents who would like to request leave to recover from childbirth and/or parental leave to provide 12 weeks' notice, as practicable, so that the Program Director can ensure proper patient coverage.

The American Board of Surgery policy outlines how much time housestaff may take in one academic year and still satisfy the ABS minimum clinical activity requirements. Leave Policy - General Surgery | American Board of Surgery (absurgery.org) If the length of the planned or needed leave surpasses the ABS minimum clinical activity requirements, your Program Director will discuss the plan with you and any needed extension of training to ensure you are fully informed. [See Leave of Absence - Effect on Advancement to the Next Level of Training and Completion of Training under Leave Benefits section in MCWAH's Housestaff Handbook,

https://infoscope.mcw.edu/FileLibrary/Groups/InfoScopeGraduateMedicalEducation/MCWAHHB07-22_.pdf].

Parents wishing to take this leave in a non-continuous fashion should discuss this request with the Program Director prior to the beginning of their leave. (Example: The non-birthing parent takes 1 week of leave immediately after birth followed by additional leave later after partner returns to work.)

The Department understands that the transition back to work following leave can be challenging. Accordingly, residents are encouraged to speak with their Program Director about potential transition assistance available under applicable MCWAH policies.

8) CHILDCARE

We understand that residents may need time off to accompany their children, including foster children, to well-child and other medical visits and/or if childcare needs arise. When these needs arise, residents should seek time off pursuant to MCWAH's FMLA, paid time off, or other applicable leave of absence policies.

9) CULTURE OF SUPPORT AND EQUITY

The Department is committed to creating an equitable and supportive environment for all its members and will be supportive of any resident's utilization of MCWAH's policies and accommodations. If issues or concerns arise regarding the application of these guidelines, conflict resolution will be led by the Program Director and the Chair of Surgery as outlined in MCWAH's Complaint and Grievance Institutional Policy. The MCW Department of Surgery does not tolerate bullying, harassment, or discriminatory language, including derisive comments about family planning or parental status. Residents and faculty members who engage in this kind of behavior are subject to discipline. Please do not hesitate to contact MCWAH's Director of Risk Management with any questions or concerns relating to discrimination, harassment, accommodations, or other concerns related to the learning and working environment.

10) CONSISTENCY WITH MCWAH POLICIES

This guidance will be read consistently with all other MCWAH policies and applicable law. To the extent inconsistent with applicable MCWAH policy, MCWAH policy shall prevail. Residents should address any questions regarding this guidance to the General Surgery Program Director.

Questions about applicable MCWAH policies should be addressed as follows:

Questions regarding leave of absence or time away should be directed to MCWAH's Benefits Coordinator.

Questions regarding ADA or pregnancy accommodations, concerns about harassment or discrimination or the complaint/grievance policy should be directed to MCWAH's Director of Risk Management.