

University of Kentucky College of Medicine Standards of Behavior for the Learning Environment

The University of Kentucky, College of Medicine has a responsibility to foster the development of professional and collegial attitudes needed to provide caring and compassionate health care. To nurture these attitudes and promote an effective learning environment, an atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality among teachers and students is essential.

As noted in the Association of American Medical Colleges' Group on Student Affairs statement on *Reaffirming Institutional Standards of Behavior*, "the medical learning environment is expected to facilitate students' acquisition of the professional and collegial attitudes necessary for effective, caring and compassionate health care. The development and nurturing of these attitudes is enhanced and, indeed, based on the presence of mutual respect between teacher and learner." This commitment involves all members of the health care team - students, residents, faculty, nurses and support staff - treating each other with reciprocal dignity and respect.

In the learning environment, faculty members are expected to:

- Provide clear objectives and expectations for the learning experience
- Look for "teaching moments" and involve students by asking questions utilizing the Socratic method of teaching (teach by asking questions to stimulate thinking and illuminate ideas)
- Tailor instruction to the needs of the individual student or group
- Reinforce or praise the student with comments about specific positive actions or responses
- Always provide appropriate feedback and evaluation in a timely fashion that is fair, specific, consistent, appropriately flexible, open and collaborative

In the learning environment, students are expected to:

- Be well read, exercise good judgment, and develop the skills necessary to be active learners in medical school and as future medical professionals
- Be self-motivated and seek out information to understand the many topics discussed in the curriculum
- Accept appropriate suggestions and criticism and, if necessary, respond by modification of behavior
- Behave with integrity and respect toward colleagues and faculty in all academic situations;
- Adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, work for extended periods, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the educational and clinical arenas;

While these goals are primary to a school's educational mission, it must be acknowledged that the social and behavioral diversity of students, faculty, residents, and staff, combined with the intensity of the interactions between them, will, from time to time, lead to alleged, perceived or real incidents of inappropriate behavior or mistreatment of individuals.

Examples of mistreatment include but are not limited to:

- sexual harassment
- discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or physical or mental disability
- humiliation or psychological punishment
- verbal abuse

The occurrence, either intentional or unintentional, of such incidents results in a disruption of the spirit of learning and a breach in the integrity and trust between teacher and learner.

What should I do if mistreatment or abuse occurs?

Any student who feels that he or she may have been subjected to abuse, discrimination, harassment, or mistreatment of any kind by residents, faculty, staff, or other student(s) has the right to seek remedy through any one of multiple options. This process shall be free of retaliation. The involved student has both informal and formal options available.

When an allegation of mistreatment occurs, an informal mechanism to address issues of a relatively mild nature involves the student meeting with the individual involved in the complaint to try to come to a mutually agreed upon resolution of the problem. This should only occur when the student is comfortable talking with the individual involved in the complaint. The student may be accompanied by the Deans for Student Affairs to assist in resolution at this level. Whenever possible, the student is encouraged, but not required, to seek remedy at the most informal level which will adequately and appropriately address the alleged mistreatment.

In some situations, however, this informal approach might be hindered by reluctance of the complainant to approach the accused. In such cases, a more formal alternative process is available for resolving the matter. This process is designed to be fair to both the complainant and the accused and to be perceived by the complainant as effective, impartial, and devoid of retaliation. Students should meet with the course or clerkship director, as well as the Deans for Student Affairs, promptly following the alleged incident, to discuss their complaint and to develop a plan for resolution of the problem. While the course or clerkship director and the Deans for Student Affairs should be the primary contacts for mistreatment complaints, students may alternatively bring their concerns to a faculty advocate, Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education, Dean of the College, or UK Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity Office. The Deans for Student Affairs will advise the student on the formal procedures for addressing their concerns, provide a forum for expressing concerns and exploring options for addressing them and/or may discuss the situation with the person about whom the student has a concern (e.g., faculty member, resident, etc.). The Deans for Student Affairs and the Senior Associate Dean of Medical Education may assist in any intervention deemed necessary for resolution.

Protection from Retaliation

Retaliation occurs when an adverse action is taken against a covered individual because he or she engaged in a protected activity, i.e. reporting discrimination or participating in an investigation of a discrimination report. Every effort will be made to protect alleged victims of mistreatment from retaliation if they seek redress. Although it is impossible to guarantee freedom from retaliation, it is possible to take preventive measures and to set up a process for responding. To help prevent retaliation, those who complain and those accused of mistreatment will be informed that retaliation is regarded as a form of discriminatory behavior. Allegations that retaliation has occurred will be handled in the same manner as complaints concerning other forms of harassment or discrimination.

Prevention and Dissemination of information about Mistreatment

The College is committed to preventing and remedying mistreatment of medical students. To that end, this policy and related procedures will be disseminated among the College's community. In addition, the College will periodically sponsor programs to inform medical students, residents, fellows, faculty, administrators, nursing and other staff about medical student mistreatment, harassment and discrimination and its harmful consequences. UK College of Medicine officials will also advise members of the College community of their rights and responsibilities under this policy and related procedures; and train personnel in the administration of the policy and procedures.

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