

WVU School of Medicine

Graduate Medical Education Disaster Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures and protections for residents and fellows enrolled in West Virginia University (WVU) Graduate Medical Education programs in the event of a disaster that significantly disrupts clinical operations, educational activities, or institutional resources. This policy ensures continuity of education, patient care, financial support, benefits, and professional liability coverage while prioritizing the safety and well-being of residents and fellows. (4.14.)

II. Scope

This policy applies to all WVU-sponsored residency and fellowship programs and all residents and fellows appointed through WVU GME.

III. Definitions

- **Disaster:** An event or circumstance (natural, man-made, public health emergency, or institutional) that significantly disrupts the ability of the Sponsoring Institution or participating sites to provide normal clinical care and/or educational activities. Examples include, but are not limited to, natural disasters, pandemics, cyberattacks, fires, infrastructure failures, or acts of violence.
- **ACGME Disaster Status:** A formal designation by the ACGME recognizing disruption to educational programs that may necessitate temporary flexibility in accreditation requirements.
- **Emergency Operations Plan (EOP):** WVU's institutional plan for managing disasters and emergencies.

IV. Policy Statement

WVU GME is committed to supporting residents and fellows during disasters by:

- Ensuring personal safety and well-being
- Maintaining continuation of salary, benefits, and professional liability coverage when feasible
- Supporting appropriate clinical and educational assignments
- Preserving compliance with ACGME requirements
- Facilitating clear communication and coordination

V. Authority and Oversight

The **Designated Institutional Official (DIO) and GME Taskforce**, in collaboration with the WVU School of Medicine and WVU Medicine hospital leadership has authority to

implement this policy and make determinations regarding resident/fellow assignments, compensation continuation, and educational modifications during a disaster.

VI. Disaster Response Procedures

A. Activation

Upon identification of a disaster:

1. The DIO or designee will assess the impact on GME programs.
2. The Office of GME will coordinate with institutional leadership to determine operational status.
3. The ACGME will be notified as required, including submission of a disaster designation request when appropriate.

B. Communication

- Residents and fellows will receive timely communication regarding:
 - Safety instructions
 - Reporting expectations
 - Changes to assignments or schedules
 - Available institutional resources and assistance
- Program Directors are responsible for maintaining direct communication with trainees in their programs.

VII. Continuation of Salary, Benefits, and Coverage (4.14.a.)

A. Salary Support

- WVU will make reasonable efforts to **continue resident and fellow salary** during a declared disaster, even if usual clinical or educational activities are temporarily disrupted.
- If funding sources are impacted, WVU GME will coordinate with hospital and institutional leadership to identify temporary funding mechanisms when feasible.

B. Benefits

- Residents and fellows will continue to receive **health insurance, disability insurance, and other employment benefits** during the disaster period, consistent with institutional policies and employment agreements, as long as they remain appointed to a WVU GME program.

C. Professional Liability Coverage

- WVU will ensure continuation of **professional liability (malpractice) coverage** for residents and fellows for approved clinical activities, including:
 - Reassigned duties within WVU facilities
 - Temporary assignments at approved alternate sites
- Residents and fellows may not engage in independent or non-approved clinical activities outside WVU GME oversight during a disaster.

VIII. Resident and Fellow Assignments

A. Clinical and Educational Reassignment

- Residents and fellows may be temporarily reassigned to:
 - Alternate clinical services
 - Different WVU Medicine sites
 - Disaster-response or emergency-related roles appropriate to their level of training
- All assignments must:
 - Be supervised appropriately
 - Be within the scope of the resident's/fellow's training and licensure
 - Comply with duty hour requirements to the extent feasible

B. Educational Continuity

- Program Directors will make reasonable efforts to:
 - Preserve educational objectives
 - Adjust rotations, evaluations, and schedules
 - Utilize alternative educational methods (e.g., virtual learning)
- Flexibility in meeting program requirements may be implemented in accordance with ACGME disaster guidance.

IX. Resident and Fellow Support Services

During a disaster, WVU GME will assist residents and fellows by facilitating access to:

- Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)
- Temporary housing or transportation resources when available
- Institutional emergency support services

X. Resident and Fellow Responsibilities

Residents and fellows are expected to:

- Follow institutional safety directives
- Maintain communication with their Program Director
- Comply with reassignment and reporting expectations unless unable to do so due to safety concerns

- Notify their Program Director or the Office of GME if they are unable to report as directed

Approved by GME Taskforce: 5/7/26

Approved by GMEC: 6/12/26