

TRAINING PROGRAM POLICY for Michigan Medicine/VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System Network of Postdoctoral Programs in Psychology		
Identification and Remediation of Insufficient Competence and/or Problematic Behavior Policy		
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PURPOSE

This policy was created to outline the procedures to be followed at the Michigan Medicine site of the Michigan Medicine/VAAAHS (MM/VAAAHS) Network of Postdoctoral Programs in Psychology when postdoctoral fellows require remediation due to insufficient competence and/or problematic behavior.

PROCEDURE

Occasionally, concerns may emerge based on fellow performance. Informal fellow-supervisor discussions provide adequate resolution of most difficulties that arise during the fellowship training. Challenges to the fellows come not only from the fellowship itself but from their personal lives as well. These challenges sometimes take the form of serious personal health crises and other crises involving family members. We try to accommodate these significant life events and adjust the workload or other expectations on the fellow accordingly. All those with performance issues are advised that if their difficulties are related to medical or mental health concerns that help is available through the institutional employee assistance programs. Fellows receive support from supervisors, mentors, Program Training Directors, the Network Director, and the Psychology Training Committee. Additionally, fellows often provide each other peer support.

Most conflicts are resolved successfully directly between the parties involved. Fellows are encouraged to discuss concerns with their clinical or research supervisors/mentors who can offer advice, guidance, and assistance or seek consultation with the Network Director.

The program additionally takes several steps to provide fellows with information and resources designed to reduce misunderstandings related to program expectations that could lead to performance concerns:

1. An orientation process at the beginning of the training year that includes a meeting with the Network Director to review program competencies, minimum levels of achievement, and program expectations.
2. Attention to the fellow’s individual skill level and training needs, including development of a formalized individual development plan (IDP).
3. Written and verbal communication of specific information about policies and procedures, including the fellowship mission and goals.
4. Written and verbal communication about expectations of trainees, fellowship completion criteria, and fellowship competency goals.
5. Written and verbal communication specific to evaluation procedures.
6. Attention to the supervisee/supervisor relationship.
7. Written and verbal input from fellows regarding any concerns pertaining to training.

8. Input from faculty supervisors in all phases of decision-making processes regarding any performance concerns or proposed remediation.
9. Regular meetings between the fellows and the Network Director.

Development of Formal Remedial Plans to Address Areas of fellow Problematic Performance/Conduct

If an informal approach is unsuccessful in resolving the concern or the concern is of a magnitude that a more formal approach is more appropriate, fellows will be engaged in a process designed to develop a remedial plan. A serious problem is identified when supervisors/mentors perceive that a fellow's behavior, attitude, or approach is causing difficulty with skill acquisition, repeated non-adherence to the rules and regulations of the training program or Michigan Medicine/VAAHS, violations of APA and/or Michigan Medicine/VAAHS professional and ethical standards, suspected misconduct that could affect patient care, or difficulties in professional functioning based on personal stress. More formally, a concern is seen as needing formal remediation when one or more of the following criterion are met:

1. The fellow receives a performance rating of "1" (REQUIRES CONSIDERABLE SUPERVISION) by a supervisor on any competency item on the Evaluation of Postdoctoral Fellow form.
2. The fellow's supervisor raises serious concerns about the fellow's performance to a Program Training Director or the Network Director.
3. Serious concerns are raised about the fellow's performance during the monthly Psychology Training Committee (PTC) meeting and results in a majority of Committee members voting to institute a remediation plan to address concerns.

Our program has developed several ways to address performance concerns once they have been identified. The fellow, fellow's supervisor, Program Training Director, and Network Director will work together to formulate and implement one or more strategies for remediation of problematic performance/conduct. Potential remediation strategies may include:

1. Increasing supervision, either with the same or other supervisors.
2. Changing the format, emphasis, and/or focus of supervision, such as increased observation and/or other monitoring of cases.
3. Reducing the fellow's clinical or other workload or modifying their schedule in other ways.
4. Requiring specific academic coursework, independent study, or specific skill practice.
5. Recommending that fellows seek outside resources as appropriate.
6. Recommending, when appropriate, a leave of absence and/or a second fellowship.
7. Recommending and assisting in implementing a career shift for the fellow.

Once specific strategies have been determined, a remediation plan will be drafted using the Competency Remediation Plan Template and signed by the fellow, clinical supervisor/mentor, Program Training Director, and Network Director. Any fellow concerns related to the planned remediation approach will be documented in the remediation plan, and the fellow will be offered the opportunity to indicate that the report was reviewed but that they are not in agreement with it if such is the case. The fellow may request and should receive copies of all formal communications regarding the issue. Remediation plans and fellow progress will be reviewed during monthly PTC meetings. Any revisions to fellow remediation plans (including setting an end date in the case of improvement in fellow performance) will be reviewed and approved by all signees. All remediation strategies will be appropriately documented and implemented in ways consistent with due process procedures.

MM/VAAAHS Network

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In the event of lack of progress towards remediation, the Network Director, in consultation with the Program Training Director, may elect to allow the fellow to continue to attempt remediation of deficiencies.

If the fellow continues to have difficulties and requires additional remediation after this extension, they must be placed on probation. If any program of remediation is significant enough to require non-promotion and/or an extension of the fellow's training, the trainee must be placed on probation. A fellow who is on probation at the time of transition from one post-graduate year is at risk of not being reappointed for the second year. This decision will be made by the Training Program Director in consultation with the Network Director and will be explicitly stated in the terms of the probation. The procedures to be followed once a fellow is placed on probation are outlined in the Evaluation, Feedback, Retention, and Termination policy.