Pediatric Infectious Diseases Fellowship Program  
Children’s Hospital Boston  

Family and Medical Leave Policy

This policy for Family and Medical Leave provides guidelines for fellows who request leave during their fellowship training and addresses the requirements of the American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) for completion of training. This document is intended to provide useful information for fellows anticipating a request for leave to understand their rights and benefits, and the impact of leave on time in training.

General Guidelines
The fellowship program will attempt to accommodate all reasonable requests to adjust a fellow’s schedule to allow the desired amount of time for leave. Fellows should discuss their anticipated leave with the program directors as soon as possible to allow for sufficient time to change rotation schedules, arrange for appropriate coverage, and to ensure that fellows meet the training requirements as specified by the ABP.

The ABP has recently clarified its position on Family and Medical Leave and time in training. The ABP requires successful completion of 36 months of fellowship training. Absences in excess of three months must be made up. These absences include vacation, sick leave, parental leave, etc. However, if a program director believes that absences totaling more than three months during the 36 months of training are justified and that the individual has met all of the core training requirements as required by the ABP, the program director may petition the ABP for an exception to the policy. Our fellowship program offers 4 weeks of paid vacation/leave time per year. Therefore any leave beyond the 4 weeks per year of paid vacation/leave time must be made up with additional training unless a waiver of time in training is granted. However, if less than four weeks of vacation have been used in years prior to the year in which leave is requested, the unused portion of vacation will count toward available time for leave in considering the ABP requirements for 33 months of training. In addition, because the ABP allows three months (13 weeks) of leave during the three year fellowship, fellows will have one additional week available during the course of fellowship for family or medical leave without exceeding the three months allowed by the ABP.

ABP Waiver of Training
The ABP will allow a waiver of the 33-month rule if the program director certifies that a fellow with 31 months or 32 months of training:

1. Is sufficiently prepared to be a competent practicing infectious diseases physician as determined primarily by completion of and satisfactory evaluations in all clinical rotations,
2. Has had sufficient time to complete their research training and work product requirements, with confirmation from the Scholarship Oversight Committee (SOC), AND
3. Has completed all Core Curriculum requirements.

It is important to note that this waiver of training policy applies not only to maternity leave but also to sick leave and any other circumstances that are judged by the ABP on a case-by-case basis. Trainees are not allowed to petition for a waiver. The petition must come from the program director and will not be considered until near the completion of training to ensure that competence has been determined. There is no obligation for a program director to seek such a waiver.

It is the policy of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases fellowship program to petition the ABP for a 1-2 month waiver of training requirements for any fellow who requests Family and Medical Leave beyond the 4 weeks offered to each fellow every year, provided that, in the judgment of the Program Directors and Division Chief, the fellow will be able to meet all clinical and research training requirements and achieve competency as a pediatric infectious disease clinician in the time frame of the 31 or 32 month fellowship. The ABP considers petitions only in the second half of the final year of training, so that a waiver of time...
in training can only be requested after the fact for leave taken earlier in the fellowship. Additional time in training will be required beyond June 30th if an ABP waiver is not granted or if the waiver does not cover the entire length of family and medical leave. In general, however, it is expected that all fellows who are in good standing in the program and who have fulfilled all core training requirements will be granted a waiver from the ABP unless there are specific questions or concerns from the ABP credentialing committee about an individual’s performance during fellowship training.

Fellows who are on an accelerated training pathway with a plan to complete fellowship in less than 3 years, are NOT eligible for a waiver of training requirements. Any fellow on an accelerated pathway will be required to make up time in training after June 30th if they wish to take leave beyond the allotted 4 weeks per year.

Maternity Leave
In general, the division offers 8 weeks of paid time off for maternity leave. If combined with the 4 weeks of paid vacation time offered each year, a fellow may receive up to 12 weeks of paid time off for maternity leave. The need for additional leave can be discussed with the program directors and division chief on a case-by-case basis.

Paternity Leave
In general, the division offers 4 weeks of paid time off for paternity leave. If combined with the 4 weeks of paid vacation time offered each year, a fellow may receive up to 8 weeks of paid time off for paternity leave. The need for additional leave can be discussed with the program directors and division chief on a case-by-case basis.

Family and Medical Leave Act and Massachusetts Maternity Leave Act
The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allows benefits-eligible employees of Children’s Hospital who have been employed by the hospital for at least 12 months to receive up to 12 weeks of job-protected, unpaid leave time for maternity leave, sick leave, or family member care leave. The Massachusetts Maternity Leave Act (MMLA) allows benefits-eligible employees of Children’s Hospital who have been employed for at least 6 months to receive up to 8 weeks of job-protected, unpaid leave time for maternity leave. The FMLA and MMLA benefits overlap, they are not additive. Therefore if an individual qualifies for both, the duration of unpaid leave granted will be 12 weeks. In general, the combination of paid leave plus vacation time offered by the division precludes the need for fellows to take unpaid leave through FMLA/MMLA.

A fellow who is granted paid leave by the division may be eligible for additional unpaid leave in accordance with FMLA/MMLA, and/or as determined on a case by case basis through discussions with the fellow, the program directors and division chief. Once again, if the total length of leave exceeds the 1-2 months permitted by a waiver from the ABP, the additional time must be made up after June 30th.

Fellows are strongly encouraged to talk with the program directors in detail about their plans for leave in order to clarify their waiver requirements, paid vs. unpaid time, and extension of training beyond June 30th.

Summary of Family and Medical Leave Policy
- The fellowship program will attempt to accommodate all reasonable requests to adjust a fellow’s schedule to allow the desired amount of time for Leave.
- Notification of the program directors should occur as soon as possible for anticipated Leave in order to consider schedule changes and assess completion of training requirements.
- The program will petition the ABP for the 1-2 month waiver of training requirements if the resident is in good standing and has met all core program requirements.
- Additional time may be required beyond June 30th if periods of leave are taken during training.
Requests for extended leave will be addressed on a case-by-case basis through discussions between the fellows, program directors, and division chief. Our goal is not only to ensure successful completion of fellowship training, but to also ensure the health and well-being of our fellows during times of illness, pregnancy, etc.