



MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM
COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Policy on Mistreatment of Students or Unprofessional Behavior

Policy Statement

The Midwestern University Physician Assistant (PA) Program of Glendale is committed to educating and mentoring students by providing a positive learning environment that is respectful and free from inappropriate conduct. This includes supervised clinical practice experiences with clinical preceptors (adjunct faculty).

Behavior reported during the Clinical Year in violation of this expectation shall be investigated by the Clinical Year Committee (CYC) and may be referred to the University's Title IX Coordinator/Dean of Students and/or Dean of the College of Health Sciences.

Policy Rationale

Students learn how to be professionals by observing and imitating their faculty and role models. The learning environment at clinical rotation sites also influences students' values, actions, concepts of professionalism, and the development of professional identities. Therefore, as paid or volunteer healthcare educators, there is the responsibility of clinical preceptors and their medical staff to convey professional values by demonstrating appropriate standards of behavior. The Association of American Medical Colleges' (AAMC) declaration of the fundamental principles of graduate medical education "Compact between Resident Physicians and Their Teachers" provides a model for clinical preceptors interacting with students.

Policy Standards

Conduct expected of those in a preceptor (adjunct faculty), or support role includes:

1. Taking responsibility for learners assigned to one's service; ensures a safe and healthy learning environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and violence.
2. Communicating expectations.
3. Assigning tasks to learners based on their knowledge, skills, and experience.
4. Providing feedback to learners in a timely, constructive, personalized, and candid manner.
5. Maintaining an ethical approach to the care of patients and demonstrating cultural competency.
6. Abiding by the Midwestern University PA Program Preceptor Handbook policies.

Examples of conduct considered inappropriate in a preceptor or support role include, but is not limited to:

1. Threatening or intimidating behavior or words.
2. Using obscenities, profanity, or racially/culturally derived/gender-based terms or names directly toward or around a learner.
3. Using threatening or obscene gestures, media, or language in the presence of a learner.
4. Degrading a person or group based on a personal characteristic or cultural demographic.
5. Ignoring learners assigned to you.

6. Requiring learners to perform personal services at any time (e.g., domestic chores, pet sitting, listening to personal problems).
7. Inviting learners to a romantic or sexual relationship; sexual assault, or sexual or gender-based discrimination or harassment through words, media, gestures, or behaviors.
8. Taunting, mocking, or humiliating a learner through acts or words.
9. Using aggressive questioning to the point of badgering or humiliation in the guise of the “Socratic method”.
10. Endangering the safety of a learner.
11. Endangering the learner’s professional development (e.g., asking the student to ignore institutional or school policy, inviting the student to do something unethical or illegal).
12. Grading is based on factors other than performance.
13. Creating disadvantages in learning opportunities, teaching, feedback, or grading based on personal characteristics of the learner.
14. Acting in retribution against any learner who reports perceived inappropriate treatment.

Reporting of Inappropriate Treatment in the Preceptor-Student Relationship

Any student or group of students may initiate a complaint against preceptors (adjunct faculty) or their staff.

Student complaints should follow one of the following procedures: Complaint communications should be submitted in writing. The complaint communication must clearly describe the problem and be accompanied by any relevant data. The statement must be specific and must be signed by the person submitting the complaint.

I Informal Complaint Process:

- a. Complaints against preceptors that do not relate to harassment/unlawful discrimination or sexual misconduct can be handled by the Program directly with the person(s) against whom the complaint is lodged, or, if necessary, with individuals at increasing levels of authority.
 - i. Complaints relating to harassment/unlawful discrimination or sexual misconduct will be processed under the procedure outlined in the Midwestern University Student Handbook.

II Formal Complaint Process: Complaints relating to accusations of professional misconduct must be filed directly with the Dean of Students.

- a. Investigation of student complaints that involve a Midwestern University preceptor(s) is undertaken jointly by the Dean of Students and the Director of Human Resources. Student complaints concerning harassment/unlawful discrimination and sexual misconduct are handled as outlined in the Policy section of the Midwestern University Student Handbook.
- b. In a formal investigation and resolution process, the name of the student(s) who generated the complaint may be shared with the accused preceptor (adjunct faculty). However, disciplinary outcomes are kept confidential and are not typically shared with the student(s) who generated the complaint.

Complaint communications should be submitted in writing to any of the following:

- Director of Clinical Education, Kimberly Carter (kcarte@midwestern.edu)
- Clinical Coordinators, Deborah Black (dblack@midwestern.edu) or Gretchen Post (gpost@midwestern.edu)
- PA Program Director, Robyn Sears (rsears@midwestern.edu)
- Student’s PA faculty mentor

- University's Title IX Coordinator, Dr. Shannon Sesterhenn (SSeste@midwestern.edu)
- Dean of Student Services, Dr. Shannon Sesterhenn (SSeste@midwestern.edu)
- Dean of the College of Health Sciences, Dr. Jared Chamberlain (jchamb@midwestern.edu)
- Required End-of-Rotation evaluation (on Typhon)

Investigation of Informal Complaints of Mistreatment of Learners in the PA Program

All informal complaints of inappropriate treatment of learners will be evaluated initially for the determination of merit by the Director of Clinical Education and Clinical Year Committee (CYC). If a complaint warrants and provides enough information to support further investigation, the committee will conduct that investigation. The timing of the investigation is dependent on several factors, but if requested by the student, it may be adjusted to protect the student. An informal investigation and resolution process do not require the complainant student's identity to be shared with the accused preceptor/staff.

The CYC will serve as a repository of complaints in the Clinical Year and will, therefore, track whether multiple complaints of inappropriate treatment by the same individuals occur. Investigations involving sexual harassment or discrimination will be discussed with, and/or investigated by, the Dean of Student Services/University's Title IX Coordinator.

Informal complaints should be able to be resolved by mediation, compromise, or education. An informal complaint resolution should not result in disciplinary action on the part of the University. If an investigation of the complaint reveals that the issue is more serious than originally believed, the resolution of the issue should be handled according to the formal complaint process.

The CYC will inform the student of the state of the Program/University's action, though specific details of that action will remain confidential.

Protection of Rights of those Reporting Inappropriate Treatment

The success of this policy and procedures in safeguarding the learning environment depends on the timely reporting of incidents of inappropriate treatment. In all cases, retaliation, or the encouragement of another to retaliate, against the person making such a complaint or the learner involved is strictly prohibited.

Adopted from the Duke University School of Medicine Policy on Appropriate Treatment of Learners and Northwestern University's Student Handbook, Appendix 2: Bylaws and Regulations of the Code of Responsibilities and Rights of the Students of Northwestern University.

References

1. Duke University School of Medicine:
<https://medschool.duke.edu/files/field/attachments/Policy%20on%20Appropriate%20Treatment%20of%20Learners.pdf>
2. Association of American Medical Colleges: www.aamc.org
3. The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mistreatment of Students or Unprofessional Behavior:
<https://www.med.wisc.edu/education/mistreatment-discrimination-harassment-of-students/>
4. Northwestern University Student Handbook

Preceptor – Learner Compact

1. As role models for our Physician Assistant (PA) students, we will maintain the highest standards of care, respect the needs and expectations of patients, and embrace the contributions of all members of the healthcare team.
2. We pledge our utmost effort to ensure that all components of the educational program for PA students are of high quality, including our contributions as teachers.
3. In fulfilling our responsibility to nurture both the intellectual and the personal development of PA students, we commit to fostering academic excellence, exemplary professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to maintaining competence through life-long learning.
4. We will demonstrate respect for all PA students as individuals, without regard to gender, race, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation; and we will cultivate a culture of tolerance among the entire staff.
5. We will do our utmost to ensure that PA students have opportunities to participate in patient care activities of sufficient variety and frequency to achieve the competencies required by their school/profession. We also will do our utmost to ensure that PA students are not assigned excessive clinical responsibilities and are not overburdened with activities of little or no educational value.
6. We will provide PA students with opportunities to exercise graded, progressive responsibility for the care of patients so that they can learn how to apply their clinical skills and critical thinking and recognize when, and under what circumstances, they should seek assistance from a physician or colleague. We will do our utmost to prepare PA students to function effectively as members of the healthcare team.
7. In fulfilling the essential responsibility, we have to our patients, we will ensure that PA students receive appropriate supervision for all of the care they provide during their training
8. We will evaluate each PA student's performance regularly, provide appropriate verbal and written feedback, and document achievement of the competencies required to meet all educational objectives.
9. We will encourage PA students to participate in non-patient care learning experiences that will enhance their professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required for practice.
10. We will nurture and support PA students in their role as teachers of other future healthcare providers and medical staff.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Adopted from the Association of American Medical Colleges "Compact Between Resident Physicians and Their Teachers" www.aamc.org/residentcompact