

POLICY TITLE: Addressing Mistreatment and Other Unprofessional Behaviors Directed at Students and Trainees	POLICY #
DEPARTMENT: Department of Medical Education; Graduate Medical Education; Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the hospitals in the Mount Sinai Hospitals Group	
ACCOUNTABLE DEANS OR DIRECTORS: Dean for Medical Education Dean for Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Dean for Graduate Medical Education	
REVIEWED BY: Course Directors Subcommittee Clinical Curriculum Subcommittee Executive Oversight Committee	
APPROVED BY: Executive Oversight Committee	
EFFECTIVE DATE: April, 2019	
LAST REVIEW DATE: November 3, 2022	

RELEVANT LCME STANDARDS:

3.6 Student Mistreatment

PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

This policy clarifies expectations for educator actions and behaviors related to mistreatment and other unprofessional behavior directed at students and trainees. It details how learners can report mistreatment and unprofessional behaviors directed at them and how the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS) Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) program, Graduate Medical Education (GME) program, and Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) and the ISMMS affiliated hospitals (collectively “Mount Sinai”) review and handle such reports. This policy also provides a process for reporting and recognizing positive behaviors and excellence in teaching or mentoring.

Mount Sinai is dedicated to providing its students, postdocs, residents, clinical fellows, faculty, staff, and patients with an anti-racist learning environment of respect, dignity, equity, inclusion, trust, and support that protects civil and professional discourse and is free from mistreatment and other unprofessional behaviors directed at students and trainees. Mount Sinai is also committed to ensuring an environment in which students and trainees feel free to report such behaviors without fear of retaliation.

Educators (defined broadly to include anyone in a teaching or mentoring role, including faculty, postdocs, residents, clinical fellows, nurses, staff, and students) bear significant responsibility for creating and maintaining this environment. As role models and evaluators, educators must practice appropriate professional behavior toward, and in the presence of, students and trainees, who may be particularly vulnerable given their dependent status.

Everyone at Mount Sinai deserves to experience a professional learning and working environment. These guidelines supplement the institutional policies on professional conduct, discrimination, harassment, grievances, and sexual misconduct; will assist in developing and maintaining optimal learning environments; and encourage educators to accept their responsibilities as representatives of Mount Sinai in their interactions with colleagues and patients. This policy is closely aligned with our institution’s cultural transformation efforts, the ISMMS Racism and Bias Initiative, the Committee of Professionalism in Healthcare (COPHE), and related policies.

Mistreatment and unprofessional behaviors directed at students and trainees interfere with the learning environment, adversely impact well-being and the trainee-mentor relationship, and have the potential for negatively impacting patient care and research. Inappropriate and unacceptable behaviors can promote an atmosphere in which mistreatment and unprofessional behaviors directed at students and trainees is accepted and perpetuated in medical and graduate education. Reports relating to the clinical setting will be reviewed in accordance with the principles detailed in this policy as part of the relevant hospital's quality assurance program.

POLICY:

While individuals might perceive behaviors differently, examples of mistreatment and/or unprofessional behaviors prohibited by this policy include, but are not limited to being:

- threatened with physical harm or physically harmed
- required to perform personal services
- subjected to offensive remarks related to gender, sexual orientation, national origin, race, color, religion, or any other category protected by law or personal characteristic
- denied opportunities for training or rewards based upon membership in a protected group
- subjected to lower evaluations or grades solely because of membership in a protected group
- publicly embarrassed or humiliated
- subjected to unwanted sexual advances
- asked to exchange sexual favors for grades or other rewards
- subjected to the threat of revoking visa status for foreign nationals

Mount Sinai has a *zero-tolerance* policy towards unprofessional behaviors directed at students and trainees. Zero tolerance means that all reported incidents are scrutinized and result in an action plan that may include feedback, remediation, or disciplinary action. Although under certain circumstances unprofessional behavior directed at students and trainees may require disciplinary action, we recognize in such episodes an opportunity to develop, improve, and remediate behaviors that detract from a learning and working environment of which we can all be proud.

PROCEDURE:

Reporting and Consulting Mechanisms - Introduction

As discussed below, students and trainees may seek advice and guidance about how to handle mistreatment and unprofessional behaviors directed at them and are encouraged to formally report these incidents. There are several ways for learners to share their concerns, including through real-time reporting mechanisms and mechanisms for periodic review (course evaluations or periodic surveys). Real-time reports must be submitted via the [Feedback Form](#) or as specified below. Reports will be reviewed by the appropriate office. The person submitting a real-time report can also indicate whether they want to have the concern addressed immediately or to delay the review until a period of time has passed, and that request will be considered, depending on the nature of the concern. Anonymous reports of mistreatment and unprofessional conduct may be submitted; however, Mount Sinai's ability to investigate an anonymous report may be limited. Reports of alleged mistreatment and unprofessional behavior directed at students and trainees will be reviewed and handled in a timely manner. Seeking advice or guidance is not considered filing a report. Reports may only be made through the Feedback Form referenced above or the avenues specified below.

Resources for Seeking Guidance or Reporting

Each of the resources identified below for the purpose of seeking guidance can assist with advice, advocacy, recommendation, or referral. Contact information for all resources is listed at the end of this policy.

Medical Students

- Seeking Guidance:
 - Course Directors
 - Clerkship Directors

- Faculty Advisors, instructors, mentors, and Deans
 - Title IX Coordinator or as otherwise provided in the Title IX policy
 - Ombuds [Office](#)
- Real Time Reporting:
 - [Feedback Form](#)
 - [Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations \(Human Resources\)](#)
 - Title IX Coordinator or as otherwise provided in the Title IX policy
 - Compliance Hotline or [Compliance Online Form](#): Compliance Hotline reports are shared quarterly unless the report is determined to be time-sensitive.
- Reporting for Aggregate Review:
 - Course evaluations
 - Clerkship evaluations
 - Compliance Hotline or [Compliance Online Form](#): Compliance Hotline reports are shared quarterly unless the report is determined to be time-sensitive.

Graduate Students

- Seeking Guidance:
 - Course or Program Directors.
 - Faculty Advisors, instructors, mentors, and Deans
 - Director of Students and Postdoc Affairs
 - [Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations](#)
 - Title IX Coordinator or as otherwise provided in the Title IX policy
 - Ombuds [Office](#)
- Real Time Reporting:
 - [Feedback Form](#)
 - [Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations](#)
 - Title IX Coordinator or as otherwise provided in the Title IX policy
 - Compliance Hotline or [Compliance Online Form](#): Compliance Hotline reports are shared quarterly unless the report is determined to be time-sensitive.
- Reporting for aggregate review:
 - Course evaluations
 - Compliance Hotline or [Compliance Online Form](#): Compliance Hotline reports are shared quarterly unless the report is determined to be time-sensitive.

Residents and Clinical Fellows

- Seeking Guidance:
 - Chair
 - Program Director
 - Teaching faculty
 - Faculty Advisors
 - Chief Residents
 - Office of GME
 - Title IX Coordinator or as otherwise provided in the Title IX policy
 - [Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations](#)
 - Ombuds Office
- Real-time reporting:
 - [Feedback Form](#)
 - [Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations](#)
 - Title IX Coordinator or as otherwise provided in the Title IX policy

- Compliance Hotline or [Compliance Online Form](#): Compliance Hotline reports are shared quarterly unless the report is determined to be time-sensitive.
- Reporting for aggregate review:
 - The GME Office will review any negative evaluation of a faculty by a resident or fellow, including reviewing prior evaluations to determine if a pattern of unprofessional behavior exists. The GME Office will batch such evaluations over a period of six months or four evaluations, whichever occurs sooner, and review them with the Chair or Program Director to maintain anonymity.
 - Regular resident evaluations of faculty in New Innovations (the GME Office batches these evaluations with no less than three others to protect the anonymity of the trainee).

Postdoctoral Fellows

- Seeking Guidance:
 - Senior Associate Dean for the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
 - Director of Students and Postdoc Affairs
 - Program Manager, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
 - Head of lab or trainee's direct supervisor in lab
 - Secondary mentor
 - Chair
 - [Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations](#)
 - Ombuds Office
- Real-time reporting:
 - [Feedback Form](#)
 - Title IX Coordinator or as otherwise provided in the Title IX policy
 - [Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations](#)
 - Compliance Hotline [Compliance Online Form](#): Compliance Hotline reports are shared quarterly unless the report is determined to be time-sensitive.
- Reporting for aggregate review:
 - [Feedback Form](#)

Ombuds Office

The [Ombuds Office](#) is not a mechanism for reporting mistreatment and unprofessional behavior. Ombudspersons are available to provide neutral, confidential, and informal assistance with conflict resolution. The Ombuds Office follows best standards of practice that are necessary to promote fair and equitable outcomes. (<https://icahn.mssm.edu/about/ombuds-office>)

Triage/Investigation

Reports made under this policy will be entered into the Mount Sinai- Vanderbilt Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy and an ad hoc group of responsible leadership (CMO, Dean COPHE staff, Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations) will be brought together as necessary. Triage of such reports is handled according to the Co-Worker Reporting System - CORS protocol. Action in response to reports under this policy depends on the nature and severity of the reported concern, and may include an in-person message to the subject of the complaint, triage to the quality assurance process of the respective hospital or other responsible office, or formal investigation by the appropriate office. Where the report does not identify the person alleged to have engaged in unprofessional behavior, the institution will collaborate with the Chair of the relevant department and the Dean for UME and/or Dean of the Graduate School and/or Dean for GME, as appropriate, to implement any needed improvements to the learning environment or other steps (for example, special grand rounds, or consultation with the CWO, Physician Wellness Committee, Employee Health Service, leadership of ODI, or Dean for Gender Equity).

A Committee on the Student/Trainee Learning Environment overseeing UME, GSBS, and GME learning environments will meet quarterly. The Committee membership includes the Dean for GME, Dean for Medical Education, Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, who will share any relevant updates to the policy, and student, postdoctoral fellow, and resident/clinical fellow representatives, who will share updates from their constituents.

Graded Response Policy

Unprofessional behavior can range from a single, first-time episode that is not egregious, to incidents that require disciplinary action. Below are examples of possible graded responses, each of which will be tailored to the circumstances of the conduct at issue.

- Feedback and counseling by a peer messenger, including a reminder of protection from retaliation
- Monitoring the behavior of the person accused of unprofessional behavior
- Mandatory meeting with a senior member of the Committee on Student/Trainee Learning Environment
- Mandatory mentoring team to foster faculty's growth and monitor behavior
- Formal letter to Chair and Dean of ISMMS, mandatory meeting with the Chair
- Formal letter to Chair and Dean of ISMMS, mandatory meeting with the Chair as well as the Dean for UME and/or Dean for GSBS and/or Dean for GME, and/or the CMO. May or may not require referral to the Physician Wellness Committee, Employee Health Service, or Student-Trainee Mental Health
- Disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal
- Other appropriate action

Post Investigation

When the Complainant's identity is known, a senior representative of the Committee on Student/Trainee Learning Environment will reach out to the Complainant at the conclusion of the process.

Quarterly aggregated and de-identified reports will be sent to students, residents, postdoctoral fellows, the ISMMS Dean, all chairs, CMOs, and hospital presidents.

ACGME and the AAMC Graduation Questionnaire data are also shared with students, residents, postdoctoral fellows, the ISMMS Dean, all chairs, CMOs, and hospital presidents.

PROTECTION FROM RETALIATION

Retaliation against or intimidation of any individual who seeks advice, raises a concern, or reports unprofessional misconduct or mistreatment in good faith will not be tolerated. Anyone who deliberately makes a false accusation with the purpose of harming or retaliating against another member of the Mount Sinai community will be investigated and appropriately addressed.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Compliance:

Hotline: 800-853-9212

[Compliance Online Form](#)

GME Office

Office phone: 212-241-6694

[Office of Faculty, Staff and Trainee Relations](#): (School Human Resources)

Office phone: 212-241-4097

[Ombuds Office](#): 212-659-8848

Title IX Coordinator:

Office: 212-241-0089

Cell: 646-245-5934

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