

SECTION FIVE – WORK SCHEDULES

POLICY NO: 5.1

SUBJECT: DUTY HOURS

I. PURPOSE

To ensure that the educational rotation schedule, including duty hours, established for each house officer is consistent with the Program Requirements.

II. RESPONSIBILITY/ REQUIREMENTS

A. Introduction:

SPUH is committed to providing house staff with a sound academic and clinical education carefully planned and balanced between the concerns for patient safety and the well being of each house officer. Each Postgraduate Program must ensure that the learning objectives of the Postgraduate Program are not compromised by excessive reliance on house staff to fulfill service obligations. Didactic and clinical education must have priority in the allotment of a house officer's time and energy. Duty hour assignments must recognize that SPUH faculty members and house officers are collectively responsible for the safety and welfare of SPUH's patients.

B. Establishment of Educational Rotation Schedules:

Educational rotation schedules (including daily and night duty hours, and on-call periods) shall be established on a monthly basis by the Program Director. The duty hours of each house officer shall be consistent with the Program Requirements. Although the educational rotation schedule established by the Program Director shall not be excessive, the Program Director shall structure the educational rotation schedule to focus on the educational needs of house staff, the needs of the patients and the continuity of care.

SPUH reserves the right to modify any house officer's educational rotation schedule in order to accommodate the needs of the Department and SPUH. Any amendments and modifications to the educational rotation schedule shall be communicated to house staff as promptly as possible.

The GME Office reviews schedules for compliance with the requirements of the State of New Jersey, the Program Requirements, and this policy. Educational rotation schedules that do not comply with this policy shall be returned to the respective Program Director for revision.

C. Program Requirements:

1. Definition of Duty Hours:

Duty hours are defined as all clinical and academic activities related to the Postgraduate Program, including patient care (both inpatient and outpatient), administrative duties related to patient care, the provision for transfer of patient care, time spent in-house during call activities, and scheduled academic activities, such as conferences. Duty hours do not include reading and preparation time spent away from the duty site.

2. Scope of Duty Hours:

- a) Duty hours must be limited to no more than eighty (80) hours per week, averaged over a four (4) week period, inclusive of all in-house call activities.
- b) All house staff must be provided with one (1) day in seven (7) free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a four (4) week period, inclusive of call. One (1) day is defined as one continuous twenty-four (24) hour period free from all clinical, education, and administrative activities.
- c) Adequate time for rest and personal activities must be provided. This should consist of a ten (10) hour time period free of duty provided between scheduled duty periods.
- d) Duty periods of PGY-1 residents must not exceed 16 hours in duration.
- e) Duty periods of PGY-2 residents and above may be scheduled to a maximum of 24 hours of continuous duty (on-Call) in the hospital. Programs must encourage residents to use alertness management strategies in the context of patient care responsibilities. Strategic napping, especially after 16 hours of continuous duty and between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., is strongly suggested.

D. On-Call Activities by House Staff (PGY-2 and above):

1. The objective of on-call activities is to provide house staff with continuity of patient care experiences throughout a twenty-four (24) hour period. House Staff must have at least 14 hours free of duty after 24 hours of in-house duty. In-house call is defined as those duty hours beyond the normal work day when a house officer is required to be immediately available at SPUH.
2. The on-call schedule will be tailored to meet the Program Requirements established for each individual Postgraduate Program. SPUH recognizes that in-house call is an integral part of each house officer's education, and is to be scheduled so as to maximally enhance the educational pursuit.
3. In-house call must occur no more frequently than every third night, averaged over a four (4) week period. On-call rooms are provided by SPUH for all house officers having on-call

responsibilities (see also Policy No. 2.6, House Staff Work Environment).

4. Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, must not exceed twenty-four (24) consecutive hours. House officers (PGY-2 and above) may remain on duty for up to maximum of four (4) additional hours to ensure an appropriate, effective, and safe transition of care. Residents who have satisfactorily completed the transition of care may, at their discretion, attend an educational conference that occurs during the four hours. If this should occur, the house officer must sleep/rest in the on-call room before driving a vehicle so as to mitigate fatigue. Driving a vehicle while knowingly fatigued would constitute reckless manslaughter (N.J.S.2C:11-5) as defined by “Maggie’s Law”.
5. No new patient (as defined the Program Requirements) must be accepted after twenty-four (24) hours of continuous duty. Residents must not be permitted to participate in the care of new patients in any patient care setting during this four-hour period. Residents also must not be assigned to outpatient clinics including continuity clinics, and must not be assigned to participate in a new procedure, such as an elective scheduled surgery, during this four-hour period.
6. At-home call (pager call) is defined as a call taken from Outside of SPUH.
7. Both faculty members and house staff must be educated to recognize the signs of fatigue and how to prevent and counteract its potential negative effects.
 - (a) The frequency of at-home call is not subject to the every third night limitation. However, at-home call must not be so frequent as to preclude rest and reasonable personal time for each house officer. House officers taking at-home call must be provided with one (1) day in seven (7) completely free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a four (4) week period.
 - (b) When a house officer is called into SPUH from home, the hours spent in-house must be counted toward the eighty (80) hour limit.
 - (c) The Program Director and the faculty must monitor the demands of at-home call and make scheduling adjustments as necessary to mitigate excessive service demands and/or fatigue.

E. Supervision of House Staff:

All patient care will be supervised by qualified faculty, and each Program Director shall ensure, direct, and document adequate

supervision of house officers at all times. Faculty schedules must be structured to provide house officers with continuous supervision, consultation, and feedback. House officers must be provided with prompt reliable systems of communication and interaction with supervisory physicians and Teaching Staff.

F. Oversight:

Each Postgraduate Program shall have written policies and procedures consistent with the Program Requirements; and shall specifically meet the requirements for residency education for duty hours and the working environment, as described in this policy and Policy No. 2. 6, House Staff Working Environment. These policies shall be distributed to all house staff and SPUH faculty. Back-up support systems shall be made available when patient care responsibilities are unusually difficult or prolonged, or if unexpected circumstances create house officer fatigue sufficient to jeopardize patient care.

G. Duty Hours Exception:

SPUH shall comply with the “eighty (80) hour per week” maximum when establishing each house officer’s educational rotation schedule. However, the ACGME work hour rules allow exceptions in the weekly limit on duty hours up to 10 percent or up to a maximum of 88 hours.

1. Duty Hours Exception Request Protocol:

- Programs must submit the work hour exception request to the GMEC.
- All exceptions requested must be based on a sound educational rationale.
- The GMEC will evaluate, discuss and approve or disapprove the request for work hour exception.

2. In case of disapproval of the work hour request:

- The program director can resubmit the work hours exception request with revised educational rationale to the GMEC.
- The program director can also appeal to the DIO.