

## PHYSICIAN HEALTH SUPPORT

The Physician Health Support Program (PHS) is a confidential<sup>1</sup> program which functions in coordination with the nationally recognized Aid for Impaired Medical Student Program (AIMS) developed at the University of Tennessee. The PHS program is a cooperative effort with the Tennessee Medical Foundation Physician's Health Program (TMF/PHP) and is designed to assess and provide assistance for any psychological, distressed behaviors, or substance abuse problem that may be affecting a resident's health or academic performance. The end goal is to welcome and restore the resident back into training.

Entry into the PHS is a formal process and requires that the resident follow a TMF/PHP prescribed rehabilitation program and contractual requirements. The residency positions of individuals entering the PHS program will be job-protected for a maximum of six (6) months, and the resident receives advocacy of the TMF/PHP, and is ready to continue training, or a determination is made that the resident will not be able to continue training (e.g. a negative Fit for Practice determination). If the treatment program exceeds six (6) months, or TMF advocacy and Fit for Practice has not been established by the end of that period, the residency Program Director may terminate the employment and training of the resident. The six (6) month job protected period shall run concurrently with any Family Medical Leave Act job protections; 'stacking' of job protection is not allowed.

If TMF/PHP treatment recommendations are followed, the GME Office will work with the resident to maintain financial support for up to 90 days through regular leave policies, payroll or disability benefits during the period of absence from training. Residents must contact their health insurance provider and disability insurance provider, to determine what insurance benefits are available to assist with treatment costs or loss of regular income. Residents should understand that, depending upon the length of their treatment, their training may be extended as required by their respective specialty board or as determined by their Program Director. Such an extension is an academic, not a disciplinary action and is not appealable.

The resident who is separated due to the expiration of the six (6) month period may reapply for the residency program. However, re-employment is not guaranteed as the position may be assigned to another resident, left vacant for a future MATCH applicant, or eliminated at the discretion of the Program Director. Any extension beyond six (6) months must be approved by the GME Office.

A resident who resumes training after completing the TMF/PHP treatment program will be subject to immediate termination if there is a recurrence of distressed behavior, TMF withdraws advocacy, or if the resident fails to maintain ongoing progress. Any resident who is subject to a similar physician health program monitoring agreement and advocacy, outside of this PHS program, must maintain advocacy. Loss of advocacy at any time during residency is considered a negative Fit for Practice determination and will result in immediate removal from clinical training and termination.

Referrals may be made confidentially by a health care provider, a co-worker, family member, friend or the physician him/herself. To make a referral or obtain more information, contact the Associate

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<sup>1</sup> Confidentiality is provided under the *Tennessee Patient Protection and Quality Improvement Act*, Tenn. Code Anno. § 63-1-150 and § 68-11-272 (as amended 2014) and as such should be considered confidential and privileged. Knowledge of the resident's participation in a TMF/PHP treatment program will be handled on a 'need-to-know' basis by the GME Office and residency program management for patient safety purposes.

Dean of GME, Natascha Thompson, M.D., at (901) 448-5364. Residents may also contact the Tennessee Medical Foundation Physician's Health Program online at: <http://www.e-tmf.org> or at the following address:

5141 Virginia Way  
Suite 110  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
Phone: (615) 467-6411  
Fax: (615) 467-6419  
Email: Use that form at: <https://e-tmf.org/contact/>

Once the resident or fellow is referred to the TMF, three (3) individuals must be notified / involved in the process:

1. Michael Baron, MD, MPH – TMF Medical Director
2. Natascha Thompson, MD, FACP – Associate Dean of GME
3. Program Director