



Policy Title: Learning Environment Policy, Including Mistreatment and Neglect

Approved By: CME

Date Approved: 8/22/2024

Review Period: Every 3 years

Responsible Office or Committee: Mistreatment Working Group

LCME Affiliated Elements: 3.6, 12.5

Policy Statement:

This policy describes expected professional behaviors of teachers and students that promote a supportive and effective learning environment at the Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) School of Medicine and how to recognize and report mistreatment and neglect when needed.

Purpose of Policy:

CWRU School of Medicine is committed to providing a safe, respectful, supportive, and inclusive learning environment. An underlying principle of the School of Medicine is that students and teachers will work together as colleagues to ensure that students achieve their fullest potential and succeed in all aspects of the educational program.

Scope of Policy:

This policy applies to all teachers and students in the CWRU School of Medicine learning environment. Teachers include all faculty, residents, fellows, near-peer teachers, and other health care and research professionals in the teaching environment. Students include all students in the Lerner College and University programs of the CWRU School of Medicine.

Policy:

Respect

Teachers are expected to treat CWRU students as professional colleagues with delineated privileges and responsibilities throughout their education. Students and teachers are expected to demonstrate respect for one another by maintaining an atmosphere conducive to learning, interacting in a considerate and cooperative manner, judging colleagues fairly, and working to resolve conflicts respectfully. Students and teachers may neither practice nor tolerate discrimination or harassment of any type.

Responsibility

Students and teachers must demonstrate responsibility by striving for excellence and professional growth, by recognizing their own limitations and seeking help when needed, by seeking frequent constructive feedback on their interactions with one another, and by conducting themselves professionally at all times in demeanor, language, and appearance in the classroom, with patients, and in health care settings. Teachers commit their time and effort to ensure appropriate delivery of an interactive curriculum. Students are expected to attend all required sessions for their own learning, to enhance the learning environment for their peers, and out of respect for



their teacher's effort. Teachers and students must demonstrate respect and professional concern by holding each other to the highest standards in learning, without abuse, humiliation, or harassment of any kind, by not exploiting a relationship for personal gain or advantage, and by demonstrating the highest standards of ethical conduct in all settings.

Drug-Free Environment

Using alcohol and other drugs in a way that could interfere with clinical or educational responsibilities of students and teachers is prohibited. For more information on this policy, see the [CWRU Division of Student Affairs website](#).

Intimate Relationships

Romantic or sexual relationships between teachers (including faculty, residents, fellows, near-peer teachers, and other health care and research professionals) and their students are prohibited while the teacher has direct supervision of or any influence on the student's assessment or academic progress. Any relationship which could *reasonably be perceived* as having any influence on the objective assessment of the student by the teacher must be **immediately disclosed** by the teacher to the appropriate education leadership (e.g. Clerkship Director).

Confidentiality

Teachers must exercise strict confidentiality when providing health care to students and complete impartiality when assessing student performance. The CWRU School of Medicine prohibits any faculty member or resident/fellow who has provided health services to a student from completing any formative or summative assessment of that student. Without exception, students must not ask any faculty or resident/fellow involved in their personal health care to provide any assessment of their performance.

Mistreatment and Neglect

Mistreatment is disrespectful or unprofessional behavior by a teacher that interferes with the learning process. Examples of mistreatment include but are not limited to public belittlement or humiliation, physical harm, threats of physical harm or punishment, inappropriate requests for personal services (shopping, babysitting, etc.), sexual harassment, and discrimination or harassment based on factors such as race, religion, age, gender, color, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national or ethnic origin, political orientation, socioeconomic status, or veteran status, among others.

Neglect is a situation in which a student is openly ignored, excluded from important decisions, or made to feel "invisible." Neglect is different from active mistreatment but can still interfere with the learning process.

Reporting Mistreatment or Neglect

Mistreatment and neglect policies are discussed at new student orientation, orientation to year 2, and again prior to starting clerkships. **Students who feel they have experienced mistreatment or neglect and are uncomfortable addressing this directly with the colleague involved are urged to discuss their concerns as soon as possible through one of the options detailed below.**



- Students in any phase of the curriculum may address their concerns with the course, block, or clerkship director, Assistant Dean charged with that phase of the curriculum, or the Associate Dean for Curriculum.
- Students in any phase of the program are also strongly encouraged to bring the matter to the attention of their Society Dean, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, or their Physician Advisor; however, because the deans work as a group practice, students may choose to speak to another Student Affairs dean if they feel more comfortable doing so.
- Students may contact the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence of the School of Medicine.
- Students have the option of contacting the Vice Dean for Medical Education or Associate Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students at the University. The University Student Affairs office is not part of the medical school administration. Students can email the dean or call the office to make an appointment. The office is located at 110 Adelbert Hall on Adelbert Road. See Discussion/Reporting Resources below for contact information
- Online Reporting: The School of Medicine's online reporting portal (Accountability Management System or AMS) allows all members of the School of Medicine community, including students, faculty, and staff, to report experiences of mistreatment or neglect in a confidential manner. Reports submitted via the AMS are reviewed by the appropriate staff and faculty member and may be referred to the Mistreatment Working Group (MWG) for further investigation.
 - Access the [Accountability Management System](#)

What Happens When a Report is Made?

All reports are handled confidentially, and wherever possible, de-identified information about the event is used. The School of Medicine is obligated to follow federal guidelines (Title IX) for reporting sexual misconduct. For other situations, reports are handled as follows:

1. Reports are collected by medical school staff.
2. If known, the reporting student is contacted by a staff member, basic information is verified, and additional information is requested if needed.
3. The report is logged on the University's Log of Student Complaints.
4. The report is delegated to the appropriate office or committee for review. If appropriate, the report is redirected to the University (e.g., Office of Equity).
5. The MWG makes an initial determination regarding whether the report could constitute mistreatment or neglect.
6. Additional information is gathered from the parties involved, and a final recommendation is made by the MWG.
7. A de-identified report is reviewed by the MWG co-Chairs with the appropriate curricular leader.

Depending on the judged severity of the event and timing related to grades and evaluation, the MWG may determine if any of the following is appropriate:

- Report is shared with the professional involved
- Report is shared with course director, clerkship director and/or program director
- Report is shared with the professional's supervisor
- Report is shared with department chair (in the case of a faculty member)



- Report is shared with Dean
- Report is shared with Office of Faculty Affairs

When deemed appropriate, reported professionals and/or their supervisors are asked to create an action plan that is shared with the MWG.

When a resolution is reached regarding the complaint, the MWG shares a summary of the outcome of the complaint with the student who submitted the report, if known.

Unprofessional behavior with learners that is egregious, severe, or continues despite feedback will result in the offender being removed from the teaching program. In the case of trainees, this may be cause for dismissal from their residency or degree program. For faculty members, this may result in termination for just cause, as provided in the [CWRU Faculty Handbook](#).

Aggregated Reports

The School of Medicine reports aggregated de-identified data on learner mistreatment to each department chair and the Dean on a regular basis, at least annually.

Discussion/Reporting Resources:

- Society Dean, Student Affairs Dean, or Physician Advisor
- [Vice Dean for Medical Education](#)
- [Associate Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students](#)
- [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence](#)
- [Title IX Notice of Nondiscrimination](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Policy](#)
- [Professional Code of Conduct](#)
- [CWRU Faculty Handbook, Chapter, 3, Article IV. Professional Responsibilities](#)
- [Relationship Management Policy](#)
- [Community Concerns Reporting System \(CCRS\)](#)