



Waiver of Continuity of Care Requirement Based on Hardship

While reaffirming the importance of continuity of care in Family Medicine residency training, the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) recognizes that hardships occur in the lives of residents that may result in the need for changing residency programs. If this occurs any time after the resident begins their PGY2 year, it would effectively place them out of compliance with the requirement that the final two years of training be accomplished in the same residency program.

Accordingly, ABFM allows for consideration of a waiver of the continuity of care requirement if the resident's training program closes during their final two years of training, or when a resident experiences a substantial hardship necessitating a transfer. In this case, a hardship is defined as an acute or chronic debilitating illness, an injury of an acute but temporary nature, or the existence of a threat to the integrity of the resident's family. The circumstance for the hardship must be one which impedes or prohibits the resident from making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the requirements of the residency program.

A request for a waiver of the continuity of care requirement on the basis of hardship must demonstrate:

- The nature and extent of the hardship;
- Assurance that disruption on continuity of care does not exceed 12 months;
- That the annual vacation/sick time permissible by ABFM and the residency program has been reasonably exhausted;
- That a medical condition causing absence from training is included under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) definition of disability.

A waiver of the continuity of care requirement will not be considered in situations in which a resident has been suspended or terminated from their training program, or they have resigned under threat of suspension or termination.

When a break in continuity exceeds 12 months due to any combination of absences due to hardship, personal time off, or institutionally authorized leave of absence, it is highly unlikely that a waiver of the continuity of care requirement will be granted.

In circumstances where the resident is changing programs, the Program Director at the accepting residency program should indicate what criteria will be used to determine the level of training at which the resident enters the new program, based on their prior training and evaluations. Entry may not be granted at a post-graduate year level beyond that which the resident had attained at the time of departure from their prior program. Given that these circumstances are uncommon and fluid, the resident may enter a new program pending a final decision by ABFM on the amount of additional training, if any, that will be required of the resident.

