Medical Student Health Care

Policy:

The School of Medicine is committed to ensuring that all medical students have access to appropriate health care services at all campus sites. UAB Student Health Services is available to all medical students, and arrangements are made so that students at campuses without a student health clinic will have timely access to primary care services in their local community.

Students may be excused from classes or clinical duties in order to access needed health care services on a reasonable basis by working through Medical Student Services or the equivalent office on regional campuses, and, if applicable, UAB Disability Support Services. Faculty members who provide medical care for students should not be involved in supervision, academic assessment, or decisions about advancement/promotion of those students.

Student health insurance (also available to spouses and dependents) or equivalent private coverage is required for all medical students. Insurance must provide coverage at any educational site, including visiting electives.

Medical students must comply with all immunization and health requirements as determined by UAB Student Health Services and the university.

University policy ensures that all medical students have rapid access to evaluation, testing, and any needed prophylactic treatment for exposure to blood/body fluids, regardless of the training site. Students receive education about environmental and occupational hazards and are informed of procedures for handling such exposures.

The school provides disability insurance for all medical students.

General Procedure:

1. **Health Care Access.** UAB Student Health Services (SHS) is available to all students. Tuscaloosa-based students may utilize the Student Health Center at the University of Alabama or UAB SHS, depending on individual arrangements. Huntsville-based clinical students may be seen at UAB SHS, and may use their health insurance to see a local primary care provider; in the latter instance the School of Medicine and Huntsville Medical Student Affairs covers any applicable co-pay. See [http://www.uab.edu/studenthealth/](http://www.uab.edu/studenthealth/).

2. **Health Insurance.** Medical students should use their VIVA Student Health Insurance or private health insurance to receive medical treatment from providers permitted under their plan. Students may use treatment providers both within UAB Medicine and in the community according to the terms of their particular insurance policy.
3. **Health Care Information Delivery.** The School of Medicine disseminates information to medical students about the availability of health services, including psychiatric/psychological services, at orientation sessions and class meetings, and on various UAB and SOM websites.

4. **School of Medicine Initiated Referrals.** Medical students who present a need for medical or psychological evaluation or treatment to Medical Student Services or the Student Affairs Office on a regional campus are referred to UAB Student Health Services (or the Student Health Center at the University of Alabama, if appropriate) or equivalent services at other clinical sites, or the Physician Resource Office.

5. **Physician Resource Office (PRO).** Because the school recognizes that confidentiality is particularly important for providers of sensitive medical care and psychiatric/psychological counseling, the Medical Director of the PRO serves as the primary liaison for such services. Students in need of neuropsychological and educational testing are referred to UAB or community psychologists who maintain a close working relationship with PRO and UAB Disability Support Services. Private health information is protected to the greatest extent possible. When the School of Medicine requires a student to undergo assessment or monitoring through PRO, the PRO physician provides documentation of compliance with the recommended evaluation and treatment plan, providing limited information about sensitive health concerns on a need-to-know basis. Students may choose to sign a release allowing the PRO physician to communicate more information with SOM administrators. See [www.uabhealth.org/physicianhealth](http://www.uabhealth.org/physicianhealth).

6. **Psychiatric Services.** For non-emergent psychiatric services, the PRO physician works closely with the school's clinical liaison in UAB Psychiatry to facilitate appropriate referrals. Students are offered treatment providers both within UAB Medicine and in the community. Students in need of routine psychiatric treatment are often referred to community psychiatrists who are not SOM faculty. On occasion, when deemed appropriate by the PRO physician and the clinical liaison to Psychiatry, students are referred to UAB faculty psychiatrists for specialized services. In this case, referral is made to a faculty member who does not supervise medical students. The clinical liaison psychiatrist communicates closely with UAB Psychiatry faculty in order to be apprised of any students who are self-referred to UAB psychiatrists or referred by outside providers to UAB faculty members. The clinical liaison psychiatrist communicates with the Clerkship Coordinator for Psychiatry and Clerkship Director for the Birmingham-based psychiatry clerkship to ensure that students are not assigned to a psychiatrist who has provided medical care to them. Similar processes are used at the regional campuses so that students are referred to community-based providers or university clinicians who do not supervise, evaluate, or participate in advancement/promotion decisions regarding medical students.

7. **Impairment.** When a medical student demonstrates evidence of possible impairment, a rapid assessment is made to determine whether the student should be referred to the UAB or other Emergency Department. This decision is typically made by the Associate or Assistant Dean for Students or an MSS Director in consultation with the UAB Assistant Vice President for Student Life, the PRO Medical Director, and/or the designated emergency consultant from UAB Psychiatry, or equivalent individuals on a regional campus. (See also Procedure for Distressed and/or Impaired Medical Students.)

8. **Faculty Provider Restrictions.** Faculty physicians who treat medical students should not supervise or assess those students in any course or clerkship or in any portion of a course or clerkship. When
staff members in Medical Student Services are aware of students who receive health care services within the UAB or UA Health System, every effort is made to inform Course and Clerkship Directors and course coordinators of potential conflicts without disclosing the nature of the conflict.

Students are informed at MS1 and MS3 orientations and through the SOM website of the policy governing health care treatment by a faculty member. Students are encouraged to bring any concerns to the attention of Medical Student Services and Course or Clerkship Directors.

Faculty members who treat medical students and who serve on the Student Academic Standing Committee (SASC) may not participate in decisions regarding the advancement or promotion of those students and must recuse themselves from a vote on any student for whom they have provided medical, psychological/psychiatric care, or with whom they have any other conflict of interest. SASC members are reminded of this on the SASC SharePoint website and at the beginning of each SASC meeting.

Students may request to work with a faculty member who has previously been their health care provider if it may provide a unique training opportunity. Such requests will be considered on a case by case basis by the Associate Dean for Students and the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education.

Faculty members are asked to self-identify conflicts of interest, including current or previous health care treatment, when evaluating students so that the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education can determine the necessary steps to take within the realm of this policy and procedure.

9. **Student Medical Clearance.** All medical students must participate in UAB's web-based medical clearance program and must comply with health requirements for physical examinations, laboratory studies, immunizations, and other health-related requirements as determined by UAB SHS and the university. Students are expected to maintain medical clearance at all times. Compliance is monitored by the school at least biannually and is determined by UAB's web-based medical clearance program. Students are informed via website and email of health requirements and deadlines. Current students who fail to comply with the health requirements may be fined, administratively withdrawn from school, and placed on involuntary leave of absence until they come into compliance. Incoming students not achieving medical clearance by the announced deadline may be fined, prevented from having patient contact, prevented from attending class or participating in orientation, or may have their acceptance to medical school withdrawn.

10. **Occupational and Environmental Hazards.** Students receive training about exposure to occupational and environmental hazards at appropriate times throughout the medical education curriculum, led by an Infectious Disease specialist. Campus-specific information is provided to all students as they begin their clinical rotations. Campus-specific procedures for care and treatment after exposure is provided on laminated cards which students attach to their ID badges. Students are surveyed annually about their familiarity with the process related to occupational exposure or injury and additional education is provided if necessary.