In this document, “resident” refers to both specialty residents and subspecialty fellows.

A. PURPOSE

Physician health is essential to quality patient care. USA GME strives to create an environment to assist residents in maintaining wellness and in proactively addressing any health condition that could potentially affect their health, well-being, and performance. Most health conditions do not affect workplace performance or impair the practice of medicine. For the purposes of this policy and procedure, a health condition is defined as including (but not limited to) any physical health, mental health, substance use/abuse, or behavioral condition that has the potential to adversely affect the practice of medicine and/or impair the resident’s performance in the program.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

1. Program directors and faculty are required under ACGME guidelines to “monitor stress, including mental or emotional conditions inhibiting performance or learning, and drug or alcohol related dysfunction.” Situations that demand excessive service or that consistently produce undesirable stress on residents should be evaluated and modified. The “Teachers Guide on Learning to Address Impairment and Fatigue to Enhance Patient Safety (LIFE) Curriculum” is available free on the Medical Crossfire website located at www.medicalcrossfire.com and is an excellent resource for faculty development in the recognition of various forms of impairment in residents.

2. Program directors and faculty should be sensitive to the needs of the resident for timely provision of confidential counseling and psychological support services. When health conditions that affect a resident’s ability to practice medicine safely are known or suspected, the program director should meet with the resident and determine the type of service and referral that best meets the needs of the resident.

3. Should the situation warrant referral to the Alabama Physician Health Program (see below), the program director must notify the Assistant Dean of Graduate Medical Education and, if indicated, Hospital Administration.

4. Some programs may have stricter standards regarding health conditions that may affect the ability to practice medicine safely, calling for additional steps or actions beyond those noted above. In such cases, the program must have a written policy, and a copy must be placed in the program manual and provided to the GME Office.
C. RESOURCES

The following resources are available to the program directors and residents:

a. University of South Alabama Employee Assistance Programs

i. Counseling and Testing Services

The University of South Alabama Counseling Service is a comprehensive developmental/mental health center providing a full range of services to meet the needs of residents. The Counseling Center is staffed by qualified Licensed Professional Counselors to assist individuals and couples in solving situational problems or improving self-understanding and personal relationships. Some of the following services are provided:

- Psychological counseling, group therapy, crisis intervention.
- Substance abuse education, assessment and counseling.
- Consultation on mental health issues and diversity.
- Training programs in communication, leadership, conflict resolution, and substance abuse prevention, and testing (aptitude, interest, personality, national testing programs).

Counseling services are available without cost (except minimal fees for testing). Strict confidentiality of records and counseling relationships is maintained at all times.

The Counseling and Testing Services office can be reached by calling 460-7051.

Their offices are located in the Alpha Hall East Building on the main campus of the University of South Alabama.

b. Alabama Physician Health Program

The Alabama Physician Health Program (APHP), established and authorized by the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners, provides confidential consultation and support to physicians, residents and medical students facing health concerns related, but not limited to:

- Chemical dependence or abuse
- Mental illness (stress, anxiety, depression, etc.)
- Personality disorders
- Disruptive behaviors
- Sexual boundaries

The APHP can be consulted by calling or emailing their confidential hotlines at:

- (344) 954-2596
- 1-800-239-6272
- alabamaphp@usa.net
For more information about the Alabama Physician Health Program, visit their website at www.alabamaphp.org

D. PROCEDURES

1. **Substance Abuse**

Residents who test positive from any of the conditions set forth in the University of South Alabama Hospitals Drug and Alcohol Policy will be subject to due diligence as outlined in this policy which is available on the USA Hospitals Intranet. In short, the resident is required to accept a referral to the University of South Alabama Employee Assistance Program, as well as any subsequent referral for further evaluation/treatment such as the Alabama Impaired Physician Health Program (APHP).

2. **Other areas of impairment**

Residents are encouraged to voluntarily self-refer to the USA Employee Assistance Programs or APHP for any of the conditions noted above. Residents may self-refer at any time, without or prior to any workplace intervention. Other sources of referral to the APHP include: residency program directors, physician peers, hospitals, regulatory agencies, office staff, family members, treatment centers and friends.