



# Managing Leave and Achieving Competency Panel Discussion

Michael Nelson, MD, PhD  
President, ABAI

2025 Program Directors Assembly Winter Meeting  
Atlanta, GA  
January 11, 2025



## Background

- 2021
  - ABMS Policy- Member Boards encouraged to establish requirements allowing at least 6wks away from training parental, caregiver and medical leave at least once during training & preserving 2wks vacation
- 2022
  - AAAAI FIT Request
    - New parents additional 2 wks resulting in 6wks in a yr w/o extension in training
    - Inclusive (birthing, non-birthing, foster/adoptive/surrogates)
  - ABAI New Parental Leave Policy Approved
- 2023
  - PDA- variability in interpretation and implementation of “weeks” and “months”
  - Request by ABAI of PDA to provide consensus definitions for board consideration
- 2024
  - ABAI, PDA, ACGME RC ongoing issue assessment



## Current (2022) Parental/Caregiver Leave Policy

- Parental/Caregiver Leave Policy Absences in excess of a total of two months over the 24-month allergy/immunology training program must be made up. An additional 2 weeks away from training is authorized once during fellowship for parental/caregiver leave taken of any length. This is inclusive of all new parents (birthing, nonbirthing, foster/adoptive, surrogates regardless of gender and sexual orientation) taking parental leave. If a program director believes that an absence in excess of the above is justified; the program director should send a letter of explanation to the ABAI for review and approval by the Ethics and Professionalism Committee as deemed necessary.



## PDA June 2024

- Option A: (9)
  - no change
- Option B: (40)
  - 2 mos to 8 wks (+2wks)
- Option C: (30)
  - absences in excess of 10wks + 2wks

***“No clear consensus”***  
***“Unable to provide a strong recommendation”***



### MEMO

Date: June 17, 2024

From: Program Directors Assembly Executive Committee

To: Michael R. Nelson, MD, PhD, ABAI President  
 ABAI Executive Committee  
 ABAI Board of Directors

Cc: AAAAI Executive Committee  
 AAAAI Program Directors Assembly

Re: ABAI Parental/Caregiver Leave Policy

Dear Dr. Nelson and the ABAI Board of Directors,

During the AAAAI Program Directors Assembly (PDA) Business Meeting in April 2024, the PDA discussed submitting a request to the ABAI for clarification of the language used in the leave policy (<https://www.abai.org/forms/PolicyProc.pdf>). Program Directors were asked to vote on the following options:

- Option A: No change to current language
- Option B: Update language to clarify “absences in excess of a total of two months” as absences in excess of 8 weeks (plus an additional 2 weeks away from training ... once during fellowship for parental/caregiver leave).
- Option C: Update language to clarify “absences in excess of a total of two months” as absences in excess of 10 weeks (plus an additional 2 weeks away from training ... once during fellowship for parental/caregiver leave).

Programs were allowed to enter additional comments for consideration if desired. Responses were received from 80 of the 88 accredited US Allergy/Immunology Fellowship Programs (as of the time of polling). The results of the voting were as follows:

- 9 voted for Option A
  - 40 for Option B
  - 30 for Option C
  - 1 voted for either Option B or C
  - 1 program abstained from the vote
- \*Full voting breakdown and comments included further down.*



## ABAI Inquiry to PDA Aug 2024 in advance of BOD Meeting

- Unofficial feedback solicited for Board consideration
  - "2 months" change to "8 weeks" to be consistent with weeks as the most commonly referred to time period in these policies
  - Provide FAQs clarifying that medical leave, vacation, and any non-educational time away from training is included
  - Clarify that educational/professional leave time should be applied to the respective 50% clinical/25% research/25% other
  - Add language that a minimum of 40-48 weeks of clinical of the 24 months of training must be clinical (with a final level TBD)



## Parental/Caregiver Policy ACGME RC 9/13/2024 Discussion

- Leave not specified in current (or pending) program requirements
- New institutional requirements forthcoming
- Consensus for adding medical leave in addition to parental/caregiver
- Consideration for setting a floor for clinical time
- Variable definitions
  - "week" with or without weekends
  - "month" 4 vs 5 weeks



## PDA Communication Oct 9, 2024

- **While the majority of programs (70 respondents) requested a clarification to language, there was a clear divide between programs preferring “two months” to be defined as 8 weeks (40 programs) and those preferring it to be defined as 10 weeks (30 programs).** We therefore were unable to provide a strong recommendation from the assembly for a specific change to the current language. Ultimately, therefore, the ABAI must weigh the desire for equity provided by uniformity in the allowable time away from training, with autonomy in allowing programs to make decisions on leave that best fit their individual needs.
- If a change is made to further define 2 months as either 8 or 10 weeks, we request information be provided as to when changes would go into effect. **We request this be made effective for fellows beginning training in 2026 in order to not impact trainees currently interviewing for or already enrolled in fellowship.**
- Program directors are not widely aware of the flexibility in the deadlines for submission of required documents to the ABAI for the certification examination. This may lead to trainees shortening their parental/medical leave. **We request the Board outline steps off-cycle trainees and their program need to take to qualify for the ABAI Certification examination in the year training is completed.**



## Parental/Caregiver Leave Policy ABAI BOD- where we stand today

- No change to current policy, will revisit at spring meeting
- Appreciates complexity and PDA/RC input
- Growing consensus for unconditional 10 weeks away from training
  - Includes all non-educational time away from training (e.g. vacation, parental/caregiver, wellness, medical leave) IAW institutional policies
  - Excludes conferences and research travel
  - Week = work days + regularly scheduled time off (e.g. weekend)
- Discussed 10 weeks ACGME RC- minimum clinical requirement (up to ABAI)
- Anticipate change to PD attestations to reflect CBME based entrustment
- Require/encourage minimum time off beyond parental leave?
- Acknowledge need for advance notification and implementation window



# Discussion