**Student Mistreatment**

The policy on student mistreatment has three main components: a statement of College of Medicine standards of behavior with regard to mistreatment, a description of methods used in the ongoing education of the college community concerning the standards of behavior and the process by which they are upheld, and a description of the College of Medicine process for responding to allegations of mistreatment.

**Standards of Behavior:** The University of Tennessee College of Medicine has a responsibility to foster in medical students, postgraduate trainees, faculty, and other staff the development of professional and collegial attitudes needed to provide caring and compassionate health care. To nurture these attitudes and promote an effective learning environment, an atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality among teachers and students is essential. While such an environment is extremely important to the educational mission of the College of Medicine, the diversity of members of the academic community, combined with the intensity of interactions that occur in the health care setting may lead to incidents of inappropriate behavior or mistreatment. The victims and perpetrators of such behavior might include students, preclinical and clinical faculty, fellows, residents, nurses, and other staff. Examples of mistreatment include: sexual harassment; discrimination based on race, gender, religion, ethnic background, sexual orientation, handicapped condition, or age; and purposeful humiliation, verbal abuse, threats, or other psychological punishment. Such actions are contrary to the spirit of learning, violate the trust between teacher and learner, and will not be tolerated by the College of Medicine.

**Education:** To promote an environment respectful of all individuals, the College of Medicine will provide ongoing education to students, residents, fellows, faculty, and other staff emphasizing the importance of professional and collegial attitudes and behavior. A process has been established to seek reconciliation between the parties in cases of alleged mistreatment. This process seeks to protect the accuser from retaliation and to protect the rights of all parties involved in a complaint. Through these efforts, the college will maintain an atmosphere essential to its educational mission in the training of physicians. To mistreat is to treat in a harmful, injurious, or offensive way. For example:

1. to speak insultingly or unjustifiably harshly to or about a person;
2. to belittle or humiliate;
3. to threaten with physical harm;
4. to physically attack (e.g., hit, slap, kick);
5. to require to perform personal services (e.g., shopping, baby-sitting);
6. to threaten with a lower grade for reasons other than course/clinical performance.

Individuals wishing to discuss possible violations of these policies should contact the College of Medicine Office of Student Affairs at (901) 448-5684. All inquiries will be held in strict confidence.

Accusations of racial or gender discrimination or harassment are referred to the UTHSC Affirmative Affairs Director. Disputes over grades are handled in accordance with College of Medicine academic policies. Additional information regarding the Mistreatment Policy and procedures can be found on the Student Affairs website: [http://www.uthsc.edu/Medicine/StudentAffairs/](http://www.uthsc.edu/Medicine/StudentAffairs/)

**If Mistreatment or Abuse Occurs:** When an allegation of mistreatment occurs, the parties directly involved should first try to resolve the matter themselves. Many incidents are amenable to resolution. In some situations, however, this informal approach might be hindered by reluctance of the accuser to approach the accused. In such cases, a more formal alternative process is available for resolving the
matter. If the incidence of mistreatment occurs during the M1/M2 years, the student should report it to the course director. If the incidence of mistreatment occurs during the clerkship years, the student should report it to the clerkship director. If the incident involves the course or clerkship director, the student should report the incident to either the appropriate Department Chair, or directly to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs or the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education. Incidences that occur on the Knoxville or Chattanooga campuses should be handled in the same fashion. The associate dean on those campuses will report the incidence to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, and/or the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education on the Memphis campus. When, after investigation, in the judgment of the Associate Dean of Student Affairs or the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education, a violation of the mistreatment policy has occurred, the Executive Dean and the Dean of that campus will be notified.

When it is the Dean’s judgment that a violation of university policy has occurred, the accused will be put on notice that he/she has violated such policy, and appropriate action will be taken.

Confidentiality and Protection from Retaliation
Every effort will be made to protect alleged victims of mistreatment from retaliation if they seek redress. Although it is impossible to guarantee freedom from retaliation, it is possible to take steps to try to prevent it and to set up a process for responding to it. To help prevent retaliation, those who are accused of mistreatment will be informed that retaliation is regarded as a form of mistreatment. Accusations that retaliation has occurred will be handled in the same manner as accusations concerning other forms of mistreatment, using the mediator and council if needed.