

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT (PA) STUDENT ORIENTATION



Revised 7/2025

WELCOME TO UTHSC COLLEGE OF MEDICINE–CHATTANOOGA!

The UTHSC College of Medicine-Chattanooga was established in 1974 as a result of a grassroots effort organized by citizens concerned with the quality of local health care. The University of Tennessee formed an affiliation with the existing medical education programs of the Erlanger Health System in Chattanooga, whereby the University became responsible for all medical education programs at the hospital. The residency programs are now university-operated, rather than community hospital programs.

We are dedicated to providing quality medical education, and we strive to strike a balance between academics and clinical training. Our mission is achieved through the efforts of an outstanding network of faculty and staff, representing major medical and surgical specialties and subspecialties.

Each year more than 200 medical students from UTHSC and other medical schools participate in clinical rotations in Chattanooga at our primary clinical training site, Erlanger Health System. The Chattanooga campus provides PA Students with clinical training during their second year of the program.

ERLANGER HEALTH SYSTEM (EHS)

Graduate Medical Education is one of the major missions of the Erlanger Health System, a comprehensive, non-profit teaching institution. Erlanger is also the area's major teaching hospital and a recognized leader in health care. As the region's only Level I Trauma Center, Erlanger is the largest provider of emergency care in the state of Tennessee and ranks in the top 10% in the nation in trauma admissions. Erlanger provides primary, secondary, and tertiary care to a population of roughly 500,000 people in Chattanooga and the surrounding counties in Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia.

The Erlanger Health System complex houses three main inpatient facilities: **Erlanger** (adults), **Children's Hospital at Erlanger** (pediatrics), and **Willie D. Miller Eye Center** (ophthalmology). The complex has over 800 beds throughout the complex, supported by more than 170 residents and 600 physicians.

Erlanger offers the following specialized critical care units: Trauma, Surgical Intensive Care, Coronary Care, Neuromedical/neurosurgical Intensive Care, Cardiac Surgery Intensive Care, and Medical Intensive Care. Children's Hospital at Erlanger provides advanced pediatric care and houses this area's only Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

RESIDENCY & FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

Our residency programs provide strong clinical experiences that serve as a basis for competent and compassionate practice and future subspecialty training. The 10 accredited residency programs at UTHSC College of Medicine-Chattanooga are:

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| • Emergency Medicine | • Pediatrics |
| • Family Medicine | • Plastic Surgery |
| • Internal Medicine | • Surgery |
| • Obstetrics/Gynecology | • Transitional Year |
| • Orthopaedic Surgery | • Urology |

Six ACGME accredited fellowship programs are also sponsored:

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| • Cardiology | • Hospice/Palliative Medicine |
| • Colon and Rectal Surgery | • Surgical Critical Care |
| • Emergency Medical Services (EMS) | • Vascular Surgery |

Five non-ACGME accredited fellowships sponsored include:

- **Advanced Emergency Ultrasonography**
- **Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery** (AAGL Approved)
- **Neuro-Interventional Surgery**
- **Orthopaedic Trauma** (AO Approved)
- **Transitions to Practice in General Surgery** (ACS Approved)

UTHSC COLLEGE OF MEDICINE-CHATTANOOGA CONTACTS:

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CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

UTHSC College of Medicine is committed to providing environments in which individual students, faculty, and staff are free to pursue their work without fear of discrimination, harassment, or recrimination. The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (SCCS) upholds the [Student Code of Conduct](#) by resolving conduct matters through a fair, equitable, and reflective process. The SCCS is the initial conduct for student conduct issues. The UTHSC medical community believes that professionals gain credibility by their commitment to society. As a professional group, we recognize our obligation to patients, colleagues, community, families, and ourselves.

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.

UTHSC 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, 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. 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.

The College will make available a readily accessible neutral party (called a mediator) whom students may approach if they believe they have been mistreated. 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:

- To speak insultingly or unjustifiably harshly to or about a person
- To belittle or humiliate
- To threaten with physical harm
- To physically attack (*e.g.*, hit, slap, kick)
- To require to perform personal services (*e.g.*, shopping, babysitting)
- To threaten with a lower grade for reasons other than course/clinical performance

Students wishing to discuss possible violations of these policies can contact the College of Medicine Office of Student Affairs at (901) 448-5684 or submit an [online complaint](#). All inquiries are 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 is on the Student Affairs [website](#).

What should you do 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 through the “Mediator.”

The role of the mediator, as the name implies, is to mediate between the conflicting parties and strive for reconciliation. It is anticipated that the mediator’s assistance will result in the resolution of most cases brought to her/his attention. If a reasonable effort on behalf of the Mediator does not yield a solution or the accuser or the accused is not satisfied with the results obtained through the Mediator’s efforts, the Mediator may contact the Conflict-Resolution Council to help resolve the case.

The Conflict-Resolution Council will assess the evidence as objectively as possible, be fair in its deliberations, and protect the rights of the accused and accuser. It is the function of this council to decide whether the matter should be brought to the attention of the Dean. 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.

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT DURING CLERKSHIPS

Students on clinical rotations are accountable for their behavior in these areas:

Professional & Ethical Conduct: The welfare of patients and their families is of foremost concern. Students must show respect and courtesy for patients and their families, even under difficult situations such as being challenged or provoked. Students must safeguard their patients' confidentiality in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). For example, there are to be no casual communications regarding patients in public places, such as hallways, elevators, cafeterias, gyms, etc.

Punctuality, Responsibility and Reliability: Students are expected to be available and present for all scheduled clerkship activities. Any absences must be approved by the clerkship director in advance. Make-up assignments will be determined by the clerkship director; absences due to illness may require a physician's statement. Tardiness is unacceptable. Students are expected to conform to the prevailing schedule at the sites where they are assigned for their clinical instruction.

Getting Along with Other Members of the Medical Team: Good relationships with nurses, aides, ward clerks, and anyone else involved in the care of the patient are absolutely essential. Students are expected to be courteous to all medical staff at the sites where they are assigned for their clinical instruction.

Getting Along with Staff: Students should always be polite and respectful to patients, faculty, residents, and all hospital and university employees. Students are expected to be considerate of and courteous to all of these employees.

Getting Along with Peers: Students are expected to have pleasant working relationships with fellow students. This includes an equitable sharing of the workload and helping each other.

If clerkship directors receive consistent complaints about a student in any of these areas, the student's grade may be affected. Serious documented problems with unprofessional or unethical behavior, in the judgment of the clerkship director, may result in a failing grade even if the student has passed the written or oral examinations and has otherwise satisfactory clinical ratings. In addition, consistent or serious complaints about unprofessional or unethical behavior may be reflected in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).

There may be times when a student has a personal problem or a personality conflict that impairs his/her ability to function properly on the clerkship. It is the student's responsibility to promptly notify the clerkship director when this first occurs and not after the fact.

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MEDICAL STUDENT ORIENTATION

- **Bio Form:** Prior to orientation, please complete your online [PA Biographical Form](#)
- **Erlanger Forms:** Complete, sign, and submit all required forms (Erlanger Computer Logon Request, GE EMR Logon Request, Medical Library Use, and Erlanger Confidentiality Agreement, etc.)
- **Photo ID badge:** You will be issued a UT/Erlanger photo ID badge. You should wear the badge while you are on duty. There is a \$5 replacement fee if lost.
- **Parking:** You will be advised about parking during Orientation.
- **Log-ins:** Your logins and passwords to access the Erlanger patient information systems will be given to you during your special PA Orientation. If you have problems logging into the system, call the Erlanger IT Help Desk at 778-TECH (8324).

HOSPITAL MATTERS

- **Scrubs:**
 - Students obtain scrubs through the vending system w/their ID badge
 - The scrubs vending system logs each transaction
 - Students must return ALL scrubs they received by the end of the rotation
 - If scrubs are not returned, the student will be charged \$20 per set upon check-out
 - UTHSC GME office has the authority to hold any grades due to fees owed for scrubs until the account is settled. **Note: Erlanger only accepts check or money orders made payable to: Xanitos*
- **Mail:** Students can obtain a mailbox and key from the Erlanger Post Office free of charge. Submit this request to the mail clerk. Erlanger's Post Office is located near the E elevators.
- **Library:** The campus medical library (located on the 3rd floor of the Whitehall Building) is open 24 hours a day for medical students, residents, and faculty. The library also includes computers which can access any Erlanger subscription or database as well as your UTHSC library digital resources.
- **Activities Fee:** UTHSC PA students who have paid their activities fee can use the UTC facilities which include an indoor pool, 8 lighted tennis courts, 2 indoor tennis courts, 6 modern racquetball courts, a library, a gymnasium, and bookstores. However, you must first obtain a pass. For more information, call UTC Campus Recreation at 423.425.4064.
- **Activities available for additional cost:** UTHSC PA students are eligible for a discounted membership at UTC's Aquatics and Recreation Center ("[The ARC](#)"). For more details, call the ARC at 423.425.4213 or visit <http://www.utc.edu/CampusRecreation>.
- **Erlanger exercise room:** Located on the 2nd floor of the Medical Mall (Elevator A), the room is accessible by keypad (code: 348) for employees, residents, medical students, and PA students.
- **PA Student contacts:**

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PROTOCOL FOR BLOOD/BODILY FLUID EXPOSURES TO PA STUDENTS

1. Ask the Head Nurse in the area where the exposure occurred or one of the administrative House Supervisors (A-1 representatives) for help completing an Erlanger occurrence/exposure report.
2. Notify the Chief Resident of the service to which PA student is assigned where the exposure occurred.
3. Notify the administrative House Supervisor (A-1 representative) who is authorized to order baseline testing on the source. If the source is known to be HIV positive, the A-1 will likely direct the PA Student to the Emergency Department if AZT prophylaxis is warranted.
4. Recommendations for any additional follow-up will be given once all lab results are reviewed. The student is responsible for any necessary follow-up.
5. Notify Medical Education Office the next working day (778-7442).

Per [UTHSC Policy](#) on Injuries & Exposures, occupational exposure to blood/bodily fluids or other potentially infectious materials should be reported immediately to University Health Services.

What is classified as an exposure to blood/bodily fluids?

An exposure occurs when there is a puncture, scratch, laceration, splash, prolonged skin contact or contact with broken skin involving blood, bodily fluids, or other potentially infectious materials.

What kinds of bodily fluids and materials are potentially infectious?

Bodily fluids of concern include: semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, peritoneal fluid, pericardial fluid, amniotic fluid, saliva in dental procedures, and other bodily fluids visibly contaminated with blood. Any unfixed tissue or organ from a human is potentially infectious as are cell or tissue cultures, organ cultures, and culture medium or other solutions from experimental animals infected with HIV or hepatitis B.

If you experience a blood and bodily fluid exposure, please follow the following instructions:

- You MUST report to University Health Services (UHS) after an exposure if it happens during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday).
- If the exposure happens after hours, on weekends or holidays, report to the facility's Employee Health Office or Emergency Department.

NOTE: *If are unable to be seen at University Health Services for your initial visit, have the facility file all charges on your insurance. The UTHSC campus-sponsored plan has this coverage. If you are on another insurance plan, other than Student United Health Insurance, you should verify that this coverage is in your policy. It is very important that these procedures are followed as you are responsible for any bills incurred.*

MEDICAL STUDENT ROLE IN PATIENT CARE AREAS – EHS POLICY

- All orders written by medical students must be signed and cosigned by a resident or attending physician before the orders are implemented.
- All invasive procedures performed (except routine venipuncture) must be supervised by the responsible resident and/or attending physician.
- A resident or attending physician will be present for all physical examinations done by the medical student when such examination includes procedures of an invasive nature. (Invasive procedures exclude pelvic exams and IV therapy.) A nurse chaperone will assist and remain with the patient during all pelvic examinations.
- Policy and Procedure information will be provided to the medical student as needed.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE AND INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

This policy is simple: ***Never release patient information to the public!***

The only EHS personnel authorized to release any information to the public about a patient's condition or treatment are the director of public relations, RNs, nursing supervisors, the director of nursing service, and administrative representatives.

- Inquiries from news media should be referred to the PR Office or the VP in charge;
- Requests for photographs of patients should be referred to the PR director;
- Written permission is always required from patients prior to any photographs being taken. If the patient is a minor, written permission from the patient or guardian is required.