

Policy on Medical Student Attendance During Community Emergencies

I. POLICY

At times, the Pittsburgh community may face emergency situations that pose risk to students: extreme weather conditions such as heavy snow or ice, civil unrest, threat of terror, power outages, or other disasters or potential disasters. In these situations, the University of Pittsburgh may decide to cancel activities for a full or partial day. Students will be notified through the emergency notification service (ENS), University webpage, and/or the emergency website (emergency.pitt.edu).

Medical students are considered “non-essential personnel” by the institution, meaning that they are not expected to put their own safety at risk by reporting for classes or clinical duties during emergencies.

If the University of Pittsburgh has officially cancelled classes or has closed, medical students are not expected to attend classroom-based activities. If the period of closure is not defined, students should monitor the official communication channels noted above to determine when it is safe to return to school. Administrators and course directors in the School of Medicine will provide direction to students regarding how cancelled classes and other instruction time will be addressed.

If the University remains open, but the community is faced with an emergency situation of some sort, students are encouraged to use their discretion when considering whether or not to attend School of Medicine activities. Student safety is our most important consideration, and students should exercise sound judgment in the decision to attend. Administrators or course directors may inform students that an activity (e.g., class) is cancelled because of the educator’s inability to arrive on campus.

Although considered “non-essential personnel,” medical students on clinical rotations may still make a significant contribution to patient care. During community emergencies, whether or not the University is officially open for classes, students on clinical rotations with on-going patient care activities are permitted to attend their clinical activities, when students feel it is safe for them to do so. Students must communicate with their clinical preceptor (faculty or senior resident preceptor) about whether it is appropriate for the student to commute to the site. Students who feel it is unsafe to report to their clinical site must notify the clinical team as soon as they may safely do so.

There will be no penalty for students who are unable to make it to their educational site due to emergency considerations (either classroom-based or hospital-based), whether or not the University officially cancels activities.

II. PURPOSE

Students need guidance as to how to respond to weather or other emergency situations—particularly with respect to their responsibility for clinical care provision.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Medical students

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

- Office of Medical Education

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

University of Pittsburgh Policy 07-04-02, Extreme Weather Conditions

VI. REFERENCES

LCME Element 5.7: Security, Student Safety, and Disaster Preparedness. A medical school ensures that adequate security systems are in place at all locations and publishes policies and procedures to ensure student safety and to address emergency and disaster Preparedness.

VII. APPROVALS

Initially approved by Dean, School of Medicine, December 22, 2017.

Revised:

Curriculum Committee, approved December 2, 2019.

Education Policy Council, approved December 9, 2019.

Executive committee, approved September 8, 2020.

Dean, School of Medicine, approved November 6, 2020.