



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20001-2399
T 202 828 0400
aamc.org

April 3, 2020

The Role of Currently Enrolled Medical Students in Volunteer and Paid Clinical Work Settings Beyond the Purview of Their Own Medical Schools: Considerations in Planning and Decision-Making

Authored by Geoffrey Young, PhD, AAMC Senior Director of Student Affairs and Programs; Veronica M. Catanese, MD, MBA, AAMC Senior Director of Accreditation Services and LCME Co-Secretary; Alison Whelan, MD, AAMC Chief Medical Education Officer

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many medical schools have strongly recommended social distancing measures to their students and have made changes to their curricula and campus life in support of these measures. In addition, we now understand that a significant percentage of younger people (in the age range of many of our students) remain asymptomatic when infected with COVID-19 and may inadvertently spread the coronavirus to others, including our critical health care workers or patients.

The AAMC continues to strongly suggest that in the absence of a critical health care workforce (HCW) need locally, medical students not be involved in any direct patient care activities.

Some students have expressed an interest in pursuing independent, non-school-related voluntary or paid clinical work outside the school's purview during the COVID-19 pandemic. While many schools have already developed processes for addressing this possibility, both schools and government entities have asked the AAMC to offer considerations for planning and decision-making.

If a school has recommended that its students maintain social distancing for any period of time, the school is advised to clearly communicate to its students what its expectations are around independent voluntary and paid work that could risk exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., in-person clinical work), including any academic consequences for actions out of accordance with the school's social distancing recommendations.

If a medical school is considering permitting its students to engage in independent voluntary or paid clinical work outside the school's purview during the COVID-19 pandemic, the AAMC strongly suggests the school clearly communicate to students that if they elect to independently work or volunteer at another setting, the responsibility for those students' competency, proper protection, and supervision and all other aspects of worker and patient safety shifts to the organization sponsoring the students' clinical work. Additionally, the AAMC recommends the school consider the following questions in planning and decision-making:

1. Are non-school-related volunteer or paid opportunities available that would allow the student to help in the pandemic response in a meaningful way while abiding by social distancing measures? Has the school engaged clinical partners in identifying those opportunities to ensure they are

aligned with community needs?

2. What impact could the student's activity have on the student's health and welfare?
 - Is the school ensuring students are aware of [up-to-date guidelines for health care professionals](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention?
 - Is the school helping students reconcile local and state guidelines with medical school guidelines, particularly if the student returns to their home community?
 - Has the school specified what access to health care the student will have while volunteering or working and after returning to campus?
 - Has the school clarified whether the student's health insurance and disability insurance cover their volunteering or work role? Has the school counseled students on the long-term implications of engaging in these activities without health and disability insurance coverage?
 - Has the school clarified whether the student has appropriate malpractice coverage when volunteering or working outside their medical student role? Has the school counseled students on the long-term implications of engaging in these activities without malpractice coverage?
 - If the student has been trained in another health profession (e.g., nurse, emergency medical technician), has the school reminded the student to verify whether the student's licensure is active and whether the student's volunteer or paid practice is within their scope of practice?
3. What impact could the student's extracurricular volunteer or work activity have on their education?
 - Will a student be able to continue to meet academic requirements while engaging in the extracurricular activity?
 - If a student's extracurricular activity will increase their risk of contracting COVID-19, what period of self-quarantine will be required before returning to classes or clinical rotations?
 - What are the student's expectations about academic credit for this activity? Has the school made and communicated decisions about academic credit before the student started the extracurricular volunteering or work? If the work is compensated, does the student understand that academic credit cannot be provided?
 - Under what conditions would a leave of absence be granted if a student's extracurricular commitment will delay or otherwise affect progression through the curriculum?
 - Will a student be advised to consult their financial aid officer to assess the impact of any relevant regulations and/or policies on current or future federal, private, or institutional financial aid?
4. What impact could the student's extracurricular activity have on the health care workforce and on patients?
 - Is the school anticipating a need to redeploy students to supplement the HCW in the immediate future?
 - Will a student's proposed extracurricular activity increase their risk of COVID-19 and thus limit their ability to engage in direct patient care when needed?
 - Is there an expedient way to ensure that students are not inadvertently exposing HCW or patients to COVID-19 if they enter the clinical setting when they return to school?
 - Will the student be required to inform the school of their participation in volunteer or paid clinical work, including the terms and commitment? What are the consequences of failing to provide this information?

5. What information does the school want about mechanisms in place to protect student and patient safety at the volunteer or work activity?
 - Does the school need information about whether the student has been oriented to the availability and accessibility of all protections appropriate to the roles and responsibilities of the voluntary or paid position?
 - Has the school reminded the student of their responsibility to work only at or below their level of competency in the clinical service they are providing?
 - Will the student be supervised by health professionals acting within their own scope of practice?

As with other AAMC statements related to the role of medical students in COVID-19-related activities, we realize that the situation is very fluid and that these considerations might change over time.