



**Boston
Children's
Hospital**

Where the world comes for answers

Boston Children's Hospital Research Fellows Manual

Revised, April 1, 2022

Boston Children's Hospital Research Fellows Manual

I. INTRODUCTION

Boston Children's Hospital is home to the world's largest research enterprise at a pediatric medical center. Boston Children's Hospital ("Boston Children's" or the "Hospital") invests heavily in research because science saves lives. In addition to performing world class research in a wide range of areas, we are focused on accelerating new treatments for devastating diseases. Our discoveries translate from the laboratory bench to the patient's bedside, where they have been improving the health of children and adults since 1869.

The postdoctoral training of new scientists is paramount to our mission. There are many hundreds of postdoctoral Research Fellows working in our laboratories and research programs forming a vital part of our research community. Investigators at Boston Children's recruit and welcome Research Fellows from around the world, resulting in an international and multicultural population working in our laboratories and research programs. We provide an inclusive environment that brings together individuals from many cultures and backgrounds to create a diverse scientific community. We believe that every Research Fellow should have a positive, productive and rewarding training experience at Boston Children's.

Boston Children's Hospital is pleased to present this new version of the Research Fellows' Policy Manual. The Research Fellows' Policy Manual was first published in 2013, in order to provide a set of rules and guidelines aimed at providing a supportive scientific environment in which Research Fellows may thrive and develop their careers to the greatest extent. It was revised in 2016. Here we present the third edition. The changes herein reflect our goal that we provide Research Fellows with the most comprehensive scientific training and career development opportunities possible, such that they may go on to have successful careers in science.

The Research Fellows Manual establishes minimum institutional standards for the treatment of Research Fellows conducting research at Boston Children's. These standards are intended to ensure the consistent and equitable treatment of all Research Fellows working at Boston Children's, without regard to Department, Division or Laboratory. The Research Fellows Manual provides guidance and sets institutional standards for Principal Investigators, faculty sponsors, advisors, mentors, and others involved in hiring, managing, and/or mentoring of Research Fellows at Boston Children's. This Manual also contains resources for career development and other support services available for Research Fellows.

This revised version of the Research Fellows Manual, effective April 1, 2022, incorporates changes in practices, policies, leaves of absences and benefits that have been adopted since the Manual's original publication, along with updates to resources and other links.

Research Fellows who are Boston Children's W-2 Employees may qualify for certain additional benefits offered to Boston Children's Employees from time to time, often due to legal limitations; nothing in this Manual shall be construed as limiting or modifying any Boston Children's Employee's rights or benefits under any Boston Children's policy.

Although this Manual is intended to set minimum standards for the engagement of all Research Fellows, Principal Investigators and Departments may deviate from the policies and guidelines described in this Manual, provided the change does not result in a Research Fellow receiving less than the minimum standards established by this Manual. In any case where a Research Fellow's grant entitles the Fellow to more generous terms than described in the Manual, the grant terms may

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set the standard.

Boston Children's expects all Research Fellows, Principal Investigators, and other faculty sponsors to follow the standards, policies and guidelines in this Manual and for individual departments to exercise appropriate oversight to ensure those expectations are met. Institutional oversight of the standards, policies and guidelines in this Manual, including any potential conflicts of interest, also occurs through the Office of Fellowship Training (OFT), Research Administration, the Compliance Department and the Human Resources Department.

While each Research Fellow will have a home in a particular department, division or program, every Fellow is also part of our larger community. To serve our community of Fellows, the Office of Fellowship Training (OFT) at Boston Children's was established in 2000 to provide resources for career and professional development to enhance and supplement the training of research and clinical fellows. To learn more about the Office of Fellowship Training, click [here](#)

II. DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH FELLOWS

The following terms, as they appear in this Manual, shall mean:

Research Fellow: An individual who holds an advanced degree (PhD, MD, MD/PhD), and who has received a postdoctoral training status appointment as preparation for a full-time career in academia and/or research, and conducts research under the guidance of a Boston Children's Principal Investigator.

Employee Research Fellow: A Research Fellow who receives all or part of their compensation from Boston Children's and is paid a salary through Boston Children's payroll as a W-2 Employee. A W-2 Employee receives a paycheck directly from Boston Children's and has taxes and other withholdings taken from their paycheck.

NRSA Research Fellow: A Research Fellow who is funded through a National Institute of Health (NIH) National Research Service Award Fellowship (e.g. T-32 or F-32) administered by Boston Children's. Per the terms of the NRSA fellowship, the service award is a paid as a stipend and is *not* considered W-2 income to the individual. As such, NRSA Research Fellows are classified as Associated Personnel (AP) rather than Employees in Boston Children's administrative system, unless the individual is eligible for salary payments from Boston Children's, in addition to their NRSA Fellowship.

Externally Funded AP Research Fellow: A Research Fellow who is not a Boston Children's Employee and who is funded solely through external grants that are not awarded to or administered by Boston Children's. Research Fellows in this category have independent, external funding and are classified as Associated Personnel (AP).

Principal Investigator (PI): A Boston Children's faculty member who oversees the laboratory research and mentoring and training of a Research Fellow.

III. HIRING, ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

A. Becoming a Research Fellow at Boston Children's

Boston Children's values the diversity of its community and is committed to maintaining a respectful environment where Research Fellows feel valued and supported. Individuals seeking a research fellowship at Boston Children's will not be discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, religion, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity,

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age, disability, genetic information, military or veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

All Research Fellows should receive an offer or appointment letter outlining the initial terms of their fellowship. This letter should describe the duties and responsibilities of the fellowship, the expected duration of the fellowship, an at will employment statement (for Employee Research Fellows), along with any other required Boston Children's information.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 requires Boston Children's to verify that Research Fellows are authorized to work in the United States. Each Research Fellow's appointment at Boston Children's will be subject to their providing proof of their eligibility to work in the United States, which may require the Research Fellow to secure an appropriate visa authorizing their appointment as a Research Fellow in the United States. Research Fellows who are not United States citizens or are not approved for lawful permanent residency must work with their PI, Department Administrator and the Boston Children's Office of Immigration Services (OIS) to obtain work authorization before their appointment begins.

Additionally, each Research Fellow's employment or appointment with Boston Children's is contingent upon a satisfactory reference check; a comprehensive background check, including but not limited to a criminal history check and verification of education credentials; completion of health screen with the Hospital's Occupational Health Services department, including compliance with the Flu and COVID-19 Vaccination Policy; and any other requirements that may be established by Boston Children's as a condition of badge and facility access.

B. Training and Orientation

All Research Fellows are required to attend new hire or new appointee orientation and trainings in connection with their position at Boston Children's and as a condition of each Research Fellow's ongoing access to Boston Children's facilities. Orientation and trainings include lab safety training, animal facility training, high reliability for research training, intellectual property training, responsible conduct in research training and research integrity training. PIs must allow Fellows time to attend the appropriate sessions as soon as possible after their arrival.

IV. POLICY STANDARDS

Research Fellows, like all members of the Boston Children's community, are expected to be familiar with and to follow all of Boston Children's policies and procedures, including those set forth in the Boston Children's [*Human Resources Manual*](#), the [*Code of Conduct/Compliance Manual*](#), the [*Information Security Manual*](#) and the [*Policy on Acceptable Use of Computer and Network Resources*](#), and the [*Environmental Health and Safety Manual*](#), among other manuals and policies.

Boston Children's regularly updates its policies and procedures, including the policies that have application to all Boston Children's Employees and/or Associated Personnel, as well as those specific policies and procedures that may have particular application to members of the research community. It is important that all Research Fellows stay informed and regularly check Boston Children's communications, Research Administration communications, and the Boston Children's intranet for policy updates and changes to standards and requirements.

To assist Research Fellows with familiarizing themselves with standards and expectations, this section of the Research Fellows Manual highlights some critical and frequently referenced Boston Children's policies. This is not an inclusive list and all Research Fellows are expected to be

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familiar with and follow all Boston Children's policies, whether specifically listed below or otherwise published on the Boston Children's intranet.

A. Standards of Conduct

All members of the Boston Children's community are expected to model and uphold our core values of respect, diversity and inclusion, teamwork and kindness, and to act with honesty and integrity in all that we do.

This section lists examples of conduct that is unacceptable at Boston Children's. Individuals who, following investigation, are found to be engaging in any of these behaviors (or any other form of misconduct or unacceptable behavior, whether or not listed below) may be subject to disciplinary action and/or loss of access to Boston Children's systems and facilities. Please refer to the specific policies noted below, as well as to the policies contained in the Human Resources Manual and the Compliance/Code of Conduct Manual for more details about specific standards, expectations and procedures, including procedures for reporting alleged conduct violations:

- Scientific or research misconduct (see the [**Research Misconduct Policy**](#));
- Failure to follow Boston Children's safety, health, and fire rules and regulations;
- Engaging in conduct that would violate a policy, standard, or regulation established by a statutory (governmental) authority regulatory agency or licensing board;
- Violating confidentiality obligations with respect to patient, personnel, data/access codes, and other proprietary and sensitive information (see [**Confidentiality of Patient, Personnel and Hospital Information**](#));
- Engaging in conduct that is intended to harm the reputation or interests of Boston Children's, or that has a reasonable potential to harm the reputation or interests of Boston Children's;
- Falsifying or altering Boston Children's records; falsifying or misrepresenting credentials; filing a false complaint or making a false report; and/or lying or misrepresenting facts during an investigation;
- Engaging in unlawful conduct that relates to or affects Boston Children's;
- Engaging in violent acts or physical or verbal threats; abuse, misuse, or destruction of Boston Children's property or the property of staff, patients or visitors (see [**Violence Prevention and Response Policy**](#));
- Unethical conduct or conduct that creates a conflict of interest (see [**Conflict of Interest Policy**](#));
- Discrimination, discriminatory harassment, sexual harassment or retaliation on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, genetic information, veteran or military status or any other protected class (see [**Policy Against Discrimination, Discriminatory Harassment and Retaliation; Policy against Sexual Harassment; Gender Identity, Transgender and Gender Transition in the Workplace Policy; Religious Accommodation Policy; Reasonable Accommodation Policy**](#); and the [**Pregnancy and Pregnancy Related Accommodations Policy**](#));
- Violating Boston Children's standards for use of alcohol or controlled substances while working or in the workplace (see [**Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace and Substance Abuse Prevention Policy**](#));
- Violating Boston Children's standards for social media (see [**Use of Social Media Policy**](#));
- Unauthorized entry into restricted areas of Boston Children's; and
- Deliberate or knowing violations of Boston Children's policies, procedures, or protocols, including any of the policies listed in this Manual or other Boston Children's Manuals.

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B. Boston Children's Intellectual Property Policy

Research Fellows should review Boston Children's complete Intellectual Property Policy, which sets forth Boston Children's approach to intellectual property in complete detail (and can be found [here](#)).

Boston Children's Intellectual Property Policy is designed to promote the development of Boston Children's research and clinical discoveries in order to benefit the public, to encourage inventorship, and to build Boston Children's research endowment. The policy sets forth each Boston Children's-affiliated individual's rights and obligations with respect to intellectual property, as well as Boston Children's rights and obligations, by:

- Describing Boston Children's ownership of intellectual property and copyrightable works, and each Research Fellow's intellectual property assignment obligations;
- Outlining each Research Fellow's obligations to disclose to Boston Children's any inventions made, conceived, or reduced to practice;
- Confirming the Boston Children's right to protect intellectual property through filing patent application(s) or registering copyright(s), or declining to pursue protection of the invention;
- Empowering Boston Children's with the responsibility of commercializing and distributing any protected inventions;
- Providing Boston Children's policy regarding disclosing or transferring intellectual property;
- Describing Boston Children's division of proceeds related to the sale or licensing of an invention, including the amounts owed to the inventor; and
- Providing other policies related to the intellectual property (including the formation of startup companies based on Boston Children's intellectual property, outside consulting arrangements, and supplemental financial investment by departments, programs, or foundations for work in research and innovation).

Importantly, Research Fellows may not share any reagents, data, laboratory animals or other intellectual property with anyone outside of the laboratory without the permission of the Principal Investigator. No reagents or laboratory materials may be removed from Boston Children's without the permission of the Principal Investigator.

C. Research Integrity Policies & Procedures

Boston Children's has published comprehensive policies regarding Boston Children's adherence to strict rules regarding research integrity. Boston Children's Research Integrity policies and resources [webpage](#) provides a list of the key policies and processes for maintaining research integrity, which include independent peer review and oversight, replication, and accountability at each stage of research. All Research Fellows are expected to participate in all required training and be completely familiar with and follow all Research Integrity policies, including, the [Boston Children's Research Misconduct Policy](#).

Boston Children's believes that research data is a valuable institutional asset, and the role of research data management in supporting research excellence and integrity is vital. The Principal Investigators, research staff (including Research fellows, students, technicians, assistants, visiting scientists, etc.), and Boston Children's share responsibilities for the access to, use of, and maintenance of original research data. Click here to review the Boston Children's [Data Management Policy](#).

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D. Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy

Industry relationships are necessary to support the Boston Children's mission. However, such relationships may create Conflicts of Interest. The purpose of Boston Children's Conflicts of Interest and Commitment Policy is to identify, manage and/or mitigate Conflicts of Interest for individuals as well as Boston Children's. This policy aims to promote complex industry collaborations while safeguarding research integrity and patient safety.

It is a fundamental responsibility of any Research Fellow (including visa holders) to report any potential conflicts of interest to Boston Children's according to the process outlined in Boston Children's [**Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy**](#). These disclosures are intended to ensure that relationships with industry are free of perceived or actual conflicts of interest, and that Boston Children's intellectual property is adequately protected. Boston Children's will work with any Research Fellow to resolve any conflicts of interest that are disclosed in a timely and forthright fashion. Failure to disclose conflicts of interest, however, could result in corrective action.

V. ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS FOR FELLOWSHIPS

A. Expectations of Principal Investigators

Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and supervising the training and scholarly pursuits of Research Fellows. In that capacity, faculty mentors should articulate clear goals, objectives, and expectations of the training and the responsibilities of Research Fellows working in their laboratory. Faculty mentors are expected to meet regularly with the Research Fellows, to communicate expectations and to provide timely feedback of the Research Fellow's progress and performance. These meetings provide Research Fellows with an opportunity for ongoing feedback, to monitor progress and ensure mutual understanding of expectations.

Research Fellows must receive a written performance evaluation from their PI at least once during each Research Fellowship year using the [**Performance review form**](#). These evaluations and annual meetings are crucial to guiding the career development of Research Fellows by assuring that there is mutual understanding of, and agreement on, performance expectations for the coming year and the Fellow's future career plans. This written evaluation should be discussed at a formal annual meeting of the PI and Research Fellow. Copies of the evaluations will be maintained in the Research Fellow's department file. The Independent Career Development (IDP) plan models found on the [**OFT website**](#), the [**NPA website**](#), and the Science Careers site [**my IDP**](#) are helpful evaluative tools.

The PI is also responsible for the following:

- Detailing Research Fellow's responsibilities, expectations, and conditions of appointment in the initial offer letter;
- Interim review of laboratory notebook content for accuracy and details of experimental methods and results;
- Mentoring Research Fellows in fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations;
- Fostering the professional development of Research Fellows towards achieving independence;
- Providing career advice and job placement assistance to Research Fellows.

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B. Expectations of Postdoctoral Research Fellows

Research Fellows actively participate in the research enterprise of Boston Children's under the supervision of a faculty mentor. Specific research expectations and training commitments should be established in collaboration with the faculty mentor and should be outlined as early as possible in the fellowship. Research Fellows are responsible for being proactive in their career development and research training. A Fellow, in cooperation with their faculty mentor, should develop an individual career development plan (IDP). The IDP should include yearly meetings with the faculty mentor to discuss the meeting of milestones and to communicate expectations for the following year. Samples of IDPs can be found on the [OFT website](#), the [NPA website](#) and on Science Careers [my IDP](#).

All materials and data collected during a Research Fellow's training at Boston Children's belong to Boston Children's, and not to the individual Research Fellow. Data and materials should not be used for purposes other than those specified as part of a Research Fellow's fellowship, or as directed by a PI/Faculty Mentor. Data and materials should not be removed from the lab or shared outside the lab in any form (including but not limited to samples, reagents, grants, manuscripts, or conference presentations) without prior discussion and consent from the PI/faculty mentor.

At the time of departure from the Boston Children's, the Fellow is responsible for notifying the faculty mentor and/or other departmental staff in writing of the disposition of Research Records, including the location of all materials and data, medical records, consent forms and any other recorded information related to the research conducted at the hospital.

Additional responsibilities of Research Fellows include, but are not limited to:

- Conscientious discharge of assigned duties
- Adherence to strict research integrity as defined by the hospital's Research Integrity Policy
- Compliance with established laboratory practices and Boston Children's standards
- Adherence to policies and regulations involving biohazards, human subjects or animals, and radiation
- Collegial conduct towards co-workers and laboratory staff

VI. SALARY AND FUNDING POLICY

Boston Children's requires that all Research Fellows, regardless of category, must have total annual funding from all sources equal to or greater than the published NIH/NRSA salary scale for the Post Graduate Year (PGY) that is commensurate with the Research Fellow's applicable year of experience. This requirement means:

- The salaries of all Employee Research Fellows must conform to and be no less than the NIH/NRSA salary scale on an annual basis, and timely salary adjustments made in accordance with notices from Research Administration and Human Resources.
- The stipends of all NRSA Research Fellows should conform to and be no less than the NIH/NRSA salary scale on an annual basis, and timely stipend adjustments made, as allowable by the NRSA grants, in accordance with notices from Research Administration and Human Resources.
- All Externally Funded AP Research Fellows must have sufficient external grant funding to meet the annual NIH/NRSA minimum for their applicable PGY; PIs are expected to

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supplement the Fellow's external funding with their own grants if the external funding of an Externally Funded AP Research Fellow is below the salary scale threshold.

Research Fellows may not rely on personal funds in order to satisfy the NIH/NRSA salary minimum for their PGY level. "Personal funds" means self-funding through private financial support unaffiliated with a grant, foundation, government, or institution.

Part-Time Appointments: Ordinarily, postdoctoral appointments are made on a full-time basis. Part-time appointments require approval from the PI, and in the case of NRSA Research Fellows, written approval from the NIH as well. In the event of an approved part-time appointment, the Research Fellow and PI should agree upon an effort schedule and prorated salary commensurate with the appointment. The terms of a part-time appointment should be documented with the OFT and, to the extent applicable, should be consistent with the rules of the Research Fellow's funding source and visa requirements.

An Employee Research Fellow's FTE in Boston Children's administrative systems should be accurate and correspond to the Employee's W-2 salary (e.g., 1.0 FTE/40 Hours = full annual salary). In the event of a change in funding source such that the amount of W-2 salary is reduced, the FTE must be adjusted on a pro-rata basis in accordance with the actual amount of salary paid directly through Boston Children's payroll (e.g., 0.25 FTE/10 hours = 25% of annual salary). The Research Fellow Ratio Change Calculator, found on the HR webpage under HR Resources for Research, should be completed and submitted to the HRMRC.

VII. TIME OFF AND PROTECTED TIME

A. Time Off for Vacation, Illness or Personal/Family Needs

A Research Fellow may take up to a total of 20 calendar days off per year, exclusive of the official Boston Children's holidays, to be used for vacations, illness or time off for personal or family needs. Time spent attending a scientific conference or scientific training on behalf of the PI's lab is not counted towards the 20 days of time off (*see* protected time section below).

For planned absences, Research Fellows must obtain prior approval for use of their time off from their PI and should make the request for time off as far in advance as possible. In cases of planned absences, PIs and Research Fellows should work together to ensure that time off can be taken with minimum disruption to laboratory operations. Research Fellows are required to keep track of time taken as time off.

Available time off per year commences as of the start date of the fellowship and is renewed each year of the fellowship (i.e., every twelve months). Unused time off may not be carried over into the following year. Time off does not have any cash value. Unused time off will expire at the end of the research fellowship and will not be cashed out at separation.

Employee Research Fellows and NRSA Research Fellows receive their regular salary or stipend, as applicable, when taking time off. Externally Funded AP Research Fellows will generally use their grant funding to cover their time off, consistent with the applicable terms of the grant.

In the event that a Research Fellow is denied a time off request that is appropriately made, the Research Fellow should contact the Human Resources Department for assistance by emailing BCHEmployeeRelations@childrens.harvard.edu.

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B. Protected Time for Training, Continuing Education and Professional Development

Research Fellows should be provided with protected time away from work for training, continuing education courses, and professional development opportunities (“protected time”), exclusive of time spent at scientific conferences as a presenter. Subject to available funding and as allowable under the terms of the Fellow’s grant, Research Fellows may receive up to a total of 5 paid days of protected time each year on a rolling basis, determined from the date of hire or appointment, for training, continuing education and professional development opportunities. Unused days do not carry over into the following year. Where more than 5 days of protected time in a year is required, a Research Fellow may request PI approval to advance protected time from the following time off year, provided that the total protected time used in a two-year period does not exceed 10 days.

Training, continuing education and professional development opportunities must be directly related to the fellowship and all requests must be approved in advance by the PI. Requests for protected time should be made in writing to the respective PI as far in advance as possible.

Employee Research Fellows and NRSA Research Fellows receive their regular salary or stipend, as applicable, for protected time. Externally Funded AP Research Fellows will generally use their grant funding to cover their protected time, consistent with the applicable terms of the grant.

Protected time under this section does not have any cash value. Unused protected time will expire at the end of the research fellowship and will not be cashed out at the termination of the fellowship.

VIII. LEAVES OF ABSENCE, BENEFITS AND INSURANCE

The information in this section describes programs and options that are available to Research Fellows, depending on their category. Please review the policies and information on the Human Resources [webpage](#) for *complete and current* information about leaves of absences and benefits, including policies, eligibility and coverage.

To guide Research Fellows in understanding what benefits are available to them through Boston Children’s, the Human Resources Department annually publishes benefits summaries, including a [Summary of Benefits for Employee Research Fellows](#) and a [Summary of Benefits for NRSA Research Fellows](#). Employee Research Fellows with a Harvard Medical School academic appointment of Instructor should refer the benefits summary for Joint Appointees.

A. Leaves of Absence

A Research Fellow may need to take a leave of absence during their fellowship. In Massachusetts, eligibility for and reimbursement during a leave of absence is complex and involves a variety of laws, regulations and policies. When considering a leave, it is helpful to keep in mind that the rules covering how much time and what type of leave a Research Fellow may be eligible for is a distinct question from whether salary support is available to cover the leave.

Prior to taking a leave of absence, Research Fellows should review the information on the Human Resources [webpage](#) on leaves of absence. All Research Fellows should also review the terms and conditions of their grant to confirm that a leave of absence is permissible, whether the grant provides any type of leave benefit, and whether they should take any additional steps prior to commencing their leave of absence.

Employee Research Fellows should refer to the HR [Absence Management webpage](#) for

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information about how to apply for a leave of absence.

Departments and Research Fellows should work collaboratively to ensure appropriate coverage and minimal disruption to laboratory operations during a leave of absence. Research Fellows should endeavor to notify their PI as early as possible, and at least thirty (30) days in advance, of their need for a leave, except in emergencies or when the need for leave is not foreseeable. When there is an emergency or the need for leave is not foreseeable, Research Fellows should endeavor to notify their PI as early as reasonably practicable.

Research Fellows are not expected or required to work during a continuous leave of absence. Nevertheless, Research Fellows may, at their own choosing, work part-time in connection with an intermittent leave; however, a PI must not require the Research Fellow to work during a continuous leave. Research Fellows must inform their PI of their anticipated return date, as well as any changes in their anticipated return date as soon as reasonably practicable.

When returning from a medical leave, the Research Fellow must provide the Hospital's Occupational Health Services Department with appropriate medical documentation indicating that the Research Fellow is able to resume work.

The following sections outline information about Medical, Parental and Family Leaves and salary support that may be available during a Fellow's leave:

The Massachusetts Paid Family and Medical Leave Act (MAPFML)

The Massachusetts Paid Family and Medical Leave Act (MAPFML) program is a government-run leave program that provides eligible employees with job protection and some income replacement for medical, parental and family leaves. Research Fellow Employees are eligible for MAPFML benefits so long as they take leave for a covered reason and meet the financial eligibility requirements established by the State.

MAPFML provides job protection and partial income replacement to eligible employees for:

- Up to 12 weeks of family leave (including bonding with a new child), in a benefit year;
- Up to 20 weeks of medical leave (including pregnancy and recovery from childbirth), in a benefit year;
- Up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a family member who is a service member, in a benefit year; and

Depending on what kind of MAPFML leave is taken, an employee may take a maximum of 26 weeks of combined family and medical leave in a benefit year. All time taken as MAPFML leave runs concurrently with any Medical, Parental or Family leave described in this Manual.

The amount of an employee's weekly MAPFML payment depends on how much the employee earns as a W-2 employee of a Massachusetts employer. The State has provided a tool to allow employees to estimate the amount of their weekly MAPFML benefit under the program (found [here](#)). For leaves beginning on or after January 1, 2022, weekly MAPFML benefits are capped at \$1,084.31 (updated annually), and may be less depending on how much the employee earns.

Salary/Stipend Continuation During a Medical Leave Related to Childbirth and/or Parental Leave – Employee Research Fellows and NRSA Research Fellows Only:

For Employee Research Fellows and NRSA Research Fellows who have completed at least twelve

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(12) months of service at Boston Children's, the Research Fellow's Department will replace lost compensation during the first 8 weeks of combined medical and/or parental leave related to a child birth or parental leave. The Department's payment will be offset by any MAPFML, short-term disability and/or grant benefits received by the Research Fellow such that the combination of all sources of income do not exceed 100% of the Fellow's regular biweekly base salary/stipend. Any supplemental pay provided under this provision will not be charged against a Research Fellow's annual time off amount (see Section VII above).

While on a medical leave related to childbirth or on parental leave, to the extent any NRSA Research Fellow is determined by the state of Massachusetts not to be eligible for MAPFML benefits solely due to the training grant stipend not being recognized as income for the purposes of benefits eligibility, Boston Children's will provide a payment to the Fellow equal to what would have been paid by the state to the Fellow under the MAPFML were the individual a W-2 Employee.

Additional Parental Leave Information – All Research Fellows

All Research Fellows who have completed at least twelve (12) months of service at Boston Children's and need time away from work to *bond with a newborn or recently adopted or foster placed childcare*, may take a parental leave of up to 12 weeks on a continuous or intermittent/reduced schedule leave in a 12-month period. Research Fellows with less than twelve (12) months of service may be eligible for a parental leave if they qualify for leave under MAPFML. Parental leave under this section runs concurrently with MAPFML, if the Research Fellow is eligible.

Parental leave is unpaid unless the Research Fellow is eligible for MAPFML payments, salary/stipend continuation (see previous section) and/or has grant funding to cover the leave.

Additional Medical Leave Information– All Research Fellows

All Research Fellows who have completed at least twelve (12) months of service at Boston Children's and need time away from work because of their *own serious health condition* may take a medical leave of up to 12 weeks on a continuous or intermittent/reduced schedule in a 12-month period. Research Fellows with less than twelve (12) months of service may be eligible for a medical leave if they qualify for leave under the state administered MAPFML. Medical leave under this section runs concurrently with MAPFML, if the Research Fellow is eligible.

Medical Leave (not related to childbirth) is unpaid unless the Research Fellow is eligible for MAPFML payments, short-term disability benefits, or salary support during a leave through the Research Fellow's grant.

Additional Family Leave Information – All Research Fellows

All Research Fellows who have completed at least twelve (12) months of service at Boston Children's and need time away from work to *care for a family member with a serious health condition* may take a leave of up to 12 weeks on a continuous or intermittent/reduced schedule leave in a 12-month period. Research Fellows with less than twelve (12) months of service may be eligible for a family leave if they qualify for leave under MAPFML. Family leave under this section runs concurrently with MAPFML, if the Research Fellow is eligible.

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Family leave is unpaid unless the Research Fellow is eligible for MAPFML payments or is eligible for salary support during a leave through the Research Fellow's grant.

While on family leave, to the extent any NRSA Research Fellow is determined by the state of Massachusetts not to be eligible for MAPFML benefits solely due to the training grant stipend not being recognized as income for the purposes of benefits eligibility, Boston Children's will provide a payment to the Fellow equal to what would have been paid by the state under the MAPFML were the individual a W-2 Employee.

Other Leave Information

Any leave of absence not designated by this Manual or Hospital policy is considered a personal leave of absence, and will be provided at the sole discretion of the Department. A personal leave of absence is not job protected.

A Research Fellow on a visa (regardless of category) is permitted to take a parental, family, or medical leave of absence in accordance with Boston Children's policy. The Research Fellow may remain in the United States or travel outside of U.S. during these types of leaves.

A Research Fellow on a visa is not permitted to take a personal leave of absence and remain in the U.S. A Research Fellow must be outside of the U.S. while on a personal leave of absence. Any leave of absence may have implications for Research Fellow's visa status. Research Fellows on a visa should seek advice from the Office of Immigration Services regarding any potential repercussions of taking a leave.

B. Benefits and Insurance Coverage Overview

Employee Research Fellows who receive 50% or more of their total funding through Boston Children's payroll are eligible for Boston Children's benefits.

This section provides a general overview of benefits, insurance coverage, and other information that is pertinent to support of Research Fellows during their fellowship. Please note that the information below is subject to change; in the event of any conflict between the benefits information in this section and the benefits information published on the Human Resources webpage, the information on the Human Resource webpage will determine benefits options, eligibility and coverage.

Research Fellows whose grant funding includes a specific allowance for certain fringe benefits (e.g., child or dependent care) may use such allowance so long as the use complies with the grant terms and applicable regulations; for guidance about the permissible use of an allowance, a Research Fellow should contact their program manager/research administrator or the Office of Sponsored Programs.

All Research Fellows, regardless of funding source, must have health insurance while they are conducting research at Boston Children's that meets compliance standards for minimally acceptable coverage.

Below is additional information about insurance coverage by Research Fellow category:

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Employee Research Fellows: Employee Research Fellows who are benefits eligible are offered health and dental insurance at an employer-subsidized rate, basic life insurance, employer paid short-term disability insurance, and other benefits made available to the Hospital's employees from time to time.

NRSA Research Fellows: NRSA Research Fellows may elect coverage through a "Core Menu" of benefits on a direct bill basis. This Core Menu of benefits consists of participation in Boston Children's medical, dental, vision, basic life insurance and short-term disability programs. NRSA Research Fellows are charged the same contribution rate as Employee Research Fellows (on a post-tax basis) for any benefits elected from the Core Menu.

NIH T32 Trainee Related Expenses (TRE) or F32 Institutional Allowances may be used by NRSA Research Fellows to cover all or a portion of their annual medical, dental and vision premiums if they are electing coverage through the Core Menu. If medical and/or dental and/or vision is elected, TRE/Institutional Allowances must go to covering these direct bill costs before other eligible expenses.

Externally Funded AP Research Fellows: All Externally Funded AP Research Fellows are required to be covered under health insurance that meets Boston Children's minimum standards. This coverage may be obtained through an eligible family member's plan or provided/paid for by the Research Fellow's external funding source. If the external funding source is unwilling or unable to provide or pay for coverage, a Fellow's Department may cover the cost of the Fellow's health insurance through a direct bill arrangement with the Hospital's external vendor.

C. Retirement Benefits

Employee Research Fellow with at least 2 ½ years of eligible service will receive a year-end retirement contribution from the Hospital equal to 4% of their eligible salary to the Fellow's account associated with The Children's Hospital Corporation Tax-Deferred Annuity Plan. With respect to this contribution, "eligible service" will include service as a Research Fellow, either as a Research Fellow Employee or as NRSA Research Fellow, and "eligible salary" will include only Boston Children's paid salary. The governing terms and conditions of eligibility for the Research Fellows' retirement benefit are contained in The Children's Hospital Corporation Tax-Deferred Annuity Plan.

IX. CORRECTIVE ACTION

A. Circumstances Leading to Corrective Action

Although it is not possible to list every circumstance leading to correction action for a Research Fellow, below are some of the circumstances that may lead to the need for corrective action:

- Failure to collaborate with or work effectively with colleagues and staff, including the creation of a hostile work environment;
- Failure to meet performance and/or productivity goals;
- Violation of applicable laws and regulations;
- Violating the Boston Children's Standards of Conduct;
- Violating Boston Children's policies or procedures; and
- Conduct that is, or an attempt to be, detrimental or disruptive to Boston Children's and/or laboratory operations.

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When a Research Fellow engages in conduct that requires corrective action, PIs are expected to follow the corrective action process for Research Fellows described below. PIs should contact the Human Resources Department for assistance prior to issuing a Letter of Concern or taking other formal corrective action, other than verbal coaching.

B. Types of Corrective Actions and Process

Boston Children's has designed a corrective action process for Research Fellows to facilitate communication and accountability between PIs and Research Fellows. The corrective action process is designed to be clear, fair, and respectful of Research Fellows.

The corrective action process may involve any of the following actions, which Boston Children's and a PI may apply in any order and as needed to best meet the circumstances of the situation:

Verbal Coaching: Verbal coaching is an informal process for addressing performance issues and other concerns, which can involve a range of seriousness, prior to taking formal corrective action. The primary purpose of verbal coaching is to give a Research Fellow an opportunity to address and correct issues promptly. Verbal coaching consists of an informal discussion between the PI and Research Fellow. The discussion typically involves establishing standards and expectations, identifying the issue (or issues) that requires correction, the timeframe for improvement, and the consequences to the Research Fellow if the individual fails to improve. This conversation should be documented, with a copy given to the Research Fellow and a copy placed in the Research Fellow's department file.

Letter of Concern: A Letter of Concern is a formal process for putting a Research Fellow on notice of an issue (or issues) which the Research Fellow must correct. A Letter of Concern may be used for any type of corrective circumstance, including circumstances that must be corrected to avoid termination. The Letter of Concern describes the issue(s), the expectations for change and improvement, including a timeframe for correction if applicable to the circumstances, and, if applicable, notice that if the issue is not corrected, or if other issues arise, the Research Fellow's appointment will be terminated.

Typically, the timeframe provided for correcting any issue(s) identified in a Letter of Concern is 90 days. However, in rare circumstances, the provided timeframe for correction may be longer, shorter, or open-ended.

A Letter of Concern may come after either verbal coaching and/or an annual Performance Evaluation, depending on the circumstances. A Letter of Concern may be issued as an immediate measure without a prior coaching in circumstances involving misconduct, policy violations or other significant performance issues.

All Letters of Concern need to be reviewed by the PI, as well as the Division, Department, or Program Manager and a representative from Human Resources before being presented to a Research Fellow.

When a Research Fellow is issued a Letter of Concern, the PI should provide a hard copy of the Letter of Concern to the Fellow and the Fellow should be notified that the Letter of Concern will be filed in the Fellow's department file and Human Resources Department. A Letter of Concern cannot be removed from a Fellow's department file without the mutual agreement of the Fellow, PI, and a representative from Human Resources.

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Investigatory Suspension: In rare circumstances, a Research Fellow may be placed on Investigatory Suspension to allow time for the PI, in partnership with Human Resources, to investigate a serious performance or conduct issue. In some (but not all) cases, the Research Fellow who is placed on investigatory suspension will be paid. The Employee Relations Advisor must be consulted before placing a Research Fellow on investigatory suspension when circumstances permit.

When determining the need for formal corrective action, the Hospital and a PI should consider the following factors: (i) the nature and seriousness of the issue; (ii) the frequency of the issue; (iii) whether prior attempts to address the issue have been made, and if so, whether they were successful; (iv) the degree of ownership of and accountability for the issue by the Research Fellow; (v) the Research Fellow's employment history with the Hospital; (vi) the Research Fellow's responsibilities; (vii) operational considerations; and (viii) other facts or circumstances particular to the situation.

C. Additional Information

This corrective action approach outlined here does not alter Boston Children's right and ability to alter or set additional terms and conditions on employment or to terminate a Research Fellow's appointment with or without notice, or with or without prior corrective action. The approach outlined here and its application to any Fellow's service does not create a contractual obligation between Boston Children's and any Research Fellow.

Any Research Fellow or PI with questions about the approach outlined here should contact an Employee Relations Advisor and/or Human Resources Business Partner for assistance with the corrective action process.

X. TRANSITION FROM FELLOWSHIP

A. Separation from Service

Fellowships may end due to a variety of circumstances, including:

End of Fellowship: Normally, in the ordinary course of training, a research fellowship will end according to the anticipated length of the appointment as outlined in Research Fellow's Offer Letter. As a Research Fellow approaches the end of the anticipated length of appointment, the PI should endeavor to provide a written reminder at least six (6) months before the date the term is scheduled to end. In the event that a PI and Research Fellow wish to extend the appointment beyond the original appointment, the PI and Research Fellow should agree to a new anticipated fellowship length, which shall be documented and shared with the OFT and Division, Department or Program Manager.

Voluntary Resignation by the Research Fellow: Research Fellows may resign from their fellowship at any time. For any Research Fellow who elects to leave before the anticipated end of the Fellow's fellowship, Boston Children's requests that the Research Fellow extend the professional courtesy of informing their PI with a minimum of thirty (30) days written notice prior to the anticipated departure date. In the event that a PI wishes to accelerate a Research Fellow's departure date upon receiving notice of a Fellow's resignation, the PI should consult with their Employee Relations Advisor.

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Separation by Boston Children's: On rare occasions, Boston Children's may deem it necessary to end a Research Fellow's fellowship, and in the case of an Employee Research Fellow, terminate their employment with Boston Children's, prior to the end of the fellowship. Separation is a serious step and PIs are expected to consult with the Human Resources Department and the Sr. Vice President of Research Administration before taking action to separate a Research Fellow.

Boston Children's may end a Research Fellow's position for reasons including, but not limited to:

Lack of Funding and/or Termination of Grant: At times, the funding source for a Research Fellow's compensation may be reduced or terminated due to insufficient funding. In the event that sufficient funding cannot be secured to continue the fellowship, PIs should endeavor to provide Research Fellows with at least 90 days' advance notice prior to such termination. Where 90 days' notice is not feasible, a PI must consult with their Division or Department Chief, in which case, the Hospital will endeavor to provide as much written notice as reasonably feasible. PIs should keep their Research Fellows informed of developments that could negatively impact the ability of the laboratory to support the fellowship program and/or laboratory operations.

For Cause: The Hospital may separate a Research Fellow for reasons including, but not limited to: lack of productivity; failure to collaborate with or work effectively with colleagues and staff; and/or failure to fulfill the duties of the position. In certain circumstances, the Hospital's termination of service follows prior efforts, informal and formal, to address and correct the issue, which are described above in the Corrective Action Process section above, which were unsuccessful in addressing the issue(s) of concern. In other circumstances, however, the Hospital's termination of a Research Fellow's position may occur without any corrective action process (including prior verbal or written counseling, a Letter of Concern, or any other type of notice). These circumstances include, but are not limited to, violations of the Standards of Conduct (see Section IV above).

Due to the at-will nature of the Research Fellow's appointment with Boston Children's, Boston Children's may also terminate the appointment of a Research Fellow at any time, with or without notice. In the event of a termination of a Research Fellow without cause, Boston Children's will endeavor to provide a Research Fellow with at least 90 days' advance notice prior to such termination. Where 90 days' notice is not feasible, a PI must consult with their Division or Department Chief, in which case, Boston Children's will endeavor to provide as much written notice as reasonably feasible. As noted above, PIs are expected to consult with Human Resources and the Sr. Vice President of Research Administration before taking action to terminate a Research Fellow's position.

The Office of Fellowship Training and Human Resources Department provides counseling to Research Fellows, and Fellows facing possible termination are encouraged to speak with the Office of Fellowship Training and Human Resources about their respective situations. The Office of Fellowship Training and Human Resources Department will make accessible the Hospital's Employee Assistance Program to all Research Fellows to ensure Research Fellows are supported during a period of professional transition.

B. Transition of Professional Work

Research Fellows are expected to work closely with their PI to complete outstanding research tasks and plan for a smooth transition of their responsibilities as their anticipated end date approaches.

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Before leaving Boston Children's, each Research Fellow is responsible for providing written notification to the PI regarding the status of research, including the status and location of all materials, data, medical and other records, consent forms, and any other information related to the research conducted by the Research Fellow during their appointment. Research Fellows are subject to Boston Children's Intellectual Property Policy and the obligations under their Participation Agreement, which the Fellow executed at the beginning their fellowship. Boston Children's owns all research notebooks, lab books, materials, data, records and any other information related to the research conducted by the Research Fellow during the fellowship, as described in further detail in the Intellectual Property Policy. At the termination of the fellowship, all such materials must remain at Boston Children's. If the Research Fellow wishes a copy of any information, the Fellow may request such copy from the Fellow's PI.

XI. RETALIATION

It is prohibited to retaliate against a Research Fellow, directly or indirectly, for using, or requesting to use, any of the provisions in this Manual, or for using or seeking to use any of the applicable policies of Boston Children's. Further, it is a violation of this Manual to retaliate against a Research Fellow directly or indirectly, for any impermissible reason by giving an inaccurate and malicious reference, interfering with career advancement, improper elimination of authorship attribution, abrupt termination of the fellowship, and/or withholding of grant support. It is also prohibited for a Research Fellow to retaliate against others for any impermissible reason, including for using, or requesting to use, any of the provisions in this Manual, or for using or seeking to use any of the applicable policies of Boston Children's.

Any Research Fellow, PI or staff person who believes they have been subjected to retaliation should contact Human Resources Department by emailing BCHEmployeeRelations@childrens.harvard.edu and the OFT. Complaints of retaliation will be promptly investigated by the Human Resources Department, and if the Hospital determines that retaliation has occurred, prompt and appropriate corrective action will be taken against the offender, as deemed appropriate by the Hospital under the circumstances.

XII. PROBLEM RESOLUTION

Boston Children's recognizes the importance of providing Research Fellows with a clear process for addressing workplace issues. Research Fellows are strongly encouraged to make reasonable and diligent efforts to resolve any workplace concerns through open discussions with their PI and/or Department Chair. Examples of such issues may include, but are not limited to: a PI's failure or refusal to follow the policies outlined in this Manual, disagreements over authorship, difficulties regarding interpersonal issues in the Lab, or other difficulties in the Lab requiring assistance with disputes resolution.

If informal efforts to resolve an issue do not address a concern to the Research Fellow's satisfaction, or if the concern is not susceptible to resolution in this manner, the Research Fellow is encouraged to seek assistance from other sources, including calling or emailing the Office of Research Fellowship Training, Boston Children's Hospital Employee Relations, or the Sr. Vice-President of Research Administration. Research Fellows may also bring their concerns to the Boston Children's Ombudsperson Office and/or the Harvard Medical School Ombudsperson Office. Contact information for these resources is listed in the Resources section of this Manual.

As noted above, no Research Fellow will be retaliated against, directly or indirectly, for using, or requesting to use, any of the provisions in this Manual, including for contacting the problem

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resolution contacts described in this section.

XIII. OTHER INFORMATION

Nothing in this Manual, including in Sections IX and X, is intended to, nor should be construed to supersede any Boston Children's policy or Harvard Medical School policy related to termination of employment, at will employment, intellectual property, non-disclosure of confidential information or other terms and conditions relating to employment, discipline or termination. All Research fellowships at Boston Children's are subject to the continued availability of sufficient funding to meet the NIH minimum for the position, the Research Fellow meeting the productivity and performance expectations for the fellowship, and compliance with Hospital policies.

Each Research Fellow's appointment with the Hospital is at will. Nothing in this Manual is intended to constitute a contract of employment, right to employment, or an employment relationship with any Research Fellow. Moreover, this Manual does not create a contract between Boston Children's and a Research Fellow, nor a legally enforceable promise by Boston Children's of any kind. This Manual is subject to regular review and modification at the discretion of Boston Children's. Boston Children's reserves the right to revise or terminate any part of the Manual at any time, and/or to depart from particular policies or guidelines at Boston Children's sole discretion. This Manual is intended to comply with all applicable laws and regulations and may be modified from time to time to comply with changes in the law.

XIV. RESOURCES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Ombuds

[BCH Ombuds Office](#)

[Harvard Ombuds Office](#)

B. Career Development

[BCH Office of Fellowship Training website](#)

[Harvard Medical School/Harvard School of Dental Medicine Office of Postdoctoral Fellows](#)

[Minority Biomedical Scientists of Harvard](#)

[BCH Young Professionals](#)

[Graduate Women in Science \(GWIS\)](#)

[Association of Women in Science \(AWIS\)](#)

[Women Entrepreneurs in Science and Technology \(WEST\)](#)

[Longwood Toastmasters](#)

[Harvard Chinese Student and Scholar Association](#)

[GSAS Harvard Biotech Club](#)

[Harvard Graduate Consulting Club](#)

[Massachusetts Biotech Council](#) Free membership for all Boston Children's fellows

[Mass Life Science Center](#) Free membership for all Boston Children's fellows

C. Housing

[Harvard Housing Office](#)

[Facebook Harvard Grad Housing](#)

[Facebook Harvard/MIT housing](#)

[Facebook Harvard Grad Market](#)

[Lee Barrett](#) Lee provides support for fellows looking for housing

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D. Transportation

[Boston Children's Commuter Services](#)

[CommuterWorks](#)

[The MBTA and Commuter Rail](#)

[Zip Car](#)

[Blue Bikes](#)

[MASCO](#)

[Logan International Airport](#)

E. Resources for International Fellows

[Boston Children's Office of Immigration Services](#)

[Harvard International Office](#)

[The Interchange Institute](#)

F. Post-Doctoral Fellow Associations

[Boston Children's Hospital Postdoc Association](#)

[National Postdoc Association](#) Free affiliate membership for Boston Children's fellows

[Harvard Medical School/Harvard School of Dental Medicine Postdoctoral Fellows Association](#)

[Boston Postdoc Association](#)

[Harvard Black Postdoc Association](#)

G. Work and Family Support

[Health Well-Being at Boston Children's](#)

[KGA: Employee Assistance Program](#)

[Harvard Neighbors](#) Creating community for all members of Harvard University

[BCH Child Care Center](#)

[BCH child Care Center tuition rates](#)

[Care.com](#)

[Neighbor Schools](#)

H. Useful Links

[BCH Holidays](#)

[Finding Funding](#)

[BCH Office of Fellowship Training's Program Offerings](#)

[HMS Catalyst](#)

[Countway Library](#)

[BCH library](#)

I. Other Benefits

[Discounts with BCH ID](#)

[Discounts with Harvard ID](#)