

ACGME Resource Document for Development of a Supervision Policy for Clinical Biochemical Genetics and Laboratory Genetics and Genomics Programs

Background

Supervision in post-doctoral education ensures patient safety, supports fellows in developing the skills and knowledge required for independent practice, and fosters continued professional growth.

The ACGME requires each post-doctoral fellowship program to establish a supervision policy defining appropriate levels based on fellows' training, ability, and patient complexity. Supervision should progressively decrease as post-doctoral fellows gain experience, even with similar conditions or procedures.

Laboratory-based training programs often require different supervision approaches than patient-oriented residencies. However, like residents, laboratory post-doctoral fellows must receive oversight appropriate to their experience, with clearly defined circumstances requiring direct supervision and a gradual reduction in oversight over time.

The ACGME requires that each post-doctoral fellowship program's policy must use the following classification of supervision (program requirements 6.7-6.9):

- **Direct Supervision:** The supervising specialist is either physically present with the post-doctoral fellow during the key portions of the interactions around patient care or is concurrently monitoring the patient care through appropriate telecommunication technology.
 - a. Hands-on wet lab work performed by post-doctoral fellows must be done under direct supervision where the supervising specialist is physically present.
 - b. Direct supervision through appropriate telecommunication technology must be limited to: discussions with faculty members, staff members, and other health care professionals regarding report interpretations; clinic appointments held via telehealth methods; and remote viewing of laboratory data in the course of interpreting results and issuing reports.
- **Indirect Supervision:** The supervising specialist is not providing physical or concurrent visual or audio supervision but is immediately available to the post-doctoral fellow for guidance and is available to provide appropriate direct supervision.
- **Oversight:** The supervising specialist is available to provide review of post-doctoral fellow involvement in procedures/encounters, with feedback provided after care is delivered.

When writing a supervision policy, the program must define situations or activities when direct supervision, indirect supervision, and/or oversight is required. The program director must evaluate each post-doctoral fellow's abilities based on specific criteria, guided by the Milestones, when determining that progress to indirect supervision and oversight is

appropriate. In this policy, programs should state to whom supervision can be delegated (e.g., allied health staff, genetic counselors). Likewise, programs must set guidelines for circumstances and events in which post-doctoral fellows must communicate with the supervising faculty member(s). Finally, each post-doctoral fellow must know the limits of their scope of authority, and the circumstances under which the post-doctoral fellow is permitted to act with conditional independence.

Recommendations for the Supervision Policy

- Consult the Program Requirements (6.7-6.11) to ensure completeness.
- Clearly define the different levels of supervision as defined in the Program Requirements and how they apply to the program; consider using examples for clarity.
- Clearly define the circumstances in which direct supervision, indirect supervision, and oversight of fellows is necessary.
 - Example: Direct supervision is required:
 - during the initial learning phase of all laboratory procedures;
 - if an unexpected or complex aspect of a procedure is encountered (e.g., an unusual condition of the sample, instrument malfunction) that was not previously addressed during training.
- Clearly explain how progressive independence from supervision will be determined and achieved.
 - Example: Direct supervision of wet-bench lab procedures is essential during the initial training period, but it would be expected to transition to indirect supervision and finally oversight as the fellow gains experience and **demonstrates competence** (as guided by the Milestones) with the procedure.
- It is recommended that programs emphasize that direct supervision through appropriate telecommunications technology is not appropriate during initial training of lab methods, but it can be used when reviewing/interpreting data and writing reports.
- Programs should consider the appropriate level of supervision if a post-doctoral fellow is performing expedited (STAT) testing.
 - Supervision at the level of at least indirect supervision is recommended.
- Define guidelines regarding circumstances and events in which fellows must communicate with supervising faculty member(s).
 - Example: When performing lab procedures, post-doctoral fellows (even those who have demonstrated competence in an analytical procedure and can perform the procedure independently, with oversight) must immediately report any and all deviations from the norm, which may include, but are not limited to, issues with sample processing, instrument operation, and/or quality control/patient preliminary data.
- Programs should define who can act as a supervising specialist for different aspects of fellowship training (e.g., faculty members, laboratory technologists, genetic counselors).
- Programs must emphasize to post-doctoral fellows the importance of knowing the limits of their scope of authority and the circumstances under which they are permitted to act with conditional independence.
 - It is strongly recommended that this policy is written and distributed to all post-doctoral fellows.