



## **INSTITUTIONAL POLICY: ST-08**

Category: Student  
Subject: Student Mental Health  
Effective Date: May 5, 2016  
Updated: N/A

### **ST 08-1. Authority**

W. Va. Code § 18B-1-6

### **ST 08-2. Introduction**

Osteopathic medical students are held to the same ethical and professional standards as physicians. Inability to perform due to undiagnosed, untreated, or uncontrolled mental illness is unacceptable, and cause for administrative action up to and including dismissal from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (“WVSOM”). For the benefit of students and patients alike, this policy seeks to (1) promote the early detection of medical students at risk of harm to self or others due to mental illness, so that intervention, evaluation and/or treatment may take place; and (2) provide a uniform protocol should student mental illness be suspected. In recognition of the stresses inherent in medical education, this policy is designed to be supportive, not punitive.

### **ST 08-3. Role of WVSOM**

- 3.1 WVSOM seeks to promote student wellness by providing a mechanism conducive to early detection of potential mental health problems, and providing a supportive environment in which they can be effectively avoided or addressed. WVSOM encourages students to self-refer if they feel that they may be suffering from a mental illness or have reason to believe they are at risk of harm to self or others. If a student fails to self-refer, WVSOM has the authority and responsibility to take appropriate action.
- 3.2 WVSOM shall ensure appropriate levels of confidentiality for a student seeking information, referral, and/or treatment unless the student is at risk of harm to self or others or refuses to comply with WVSOM requirements concerning mental health.
- 3.3 The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean has the authority to remove a student from any educational activities if there is evidence that (a) the student’s behavior may negatively affect student academic performance or patient care, (b) the student no longer meets WVSOM’s Health and Technical Standards, or (c) the student is reasonably believed to be at risk of harm to self or others. Repeated violations of this policy will result in additional administrative action, up to and including dismissal.

#### **ST 08-4. Student Removal Hearing**

If a student is removed from educational activities under Section 3.3, the student may request a hearing with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean within five (5) business days of his or her removal and may present relevant evidence concerning why he or she should be permitted to return to educational activities. Notwithstanding the hearing request, the student shall remain removed from educational activities until the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean permits the student to return to educational activities. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean is final.

#### **ST 08-5. Mental Health Intervention**

- 5.1 Mental health issues may include academic stress, personal problems, substance abuse and chemical dependency, and major mental illness. WVSOM recognizes that mental health problems may negatively affect a student's academic performance or patient care; may preclude the student's ability to meet WVSOM's Health and Technical Standards; and may put the student at risk of harm to self or others. In all cases, early recognition and prompt treatment are the most effective approaches, and students are encouraged to utilize resources identified and/or provided by WVSOM.
- 5.2 Concerns regarding a student's mental health should be reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean.
- 5.3 Appropriate mental health intervention may be obtained in one of two ways:
  - 5.3.1 **Student self-referral:** A student may self-refer to a qualified mental health provider of his/her choice.
  - 5.3.2 **Administrative referral:** Whether or not a student has self-referred for mental health services, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean may require that the student undergo a mental health evaluation and/or treatment to assist in determining the student's ability to meet WVSOM's Health and Technical Standards or whether the student may be at risk of harm to self or others.

#### **ST 08-6. Excused Absences for Mental Health Reasons**

- 6.1 Any educational activities missed while on required leave under Section 5.3.2 will be considered excused medical leave if the student complies with WVSOM's requirements, including those mandated by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, concerning the student's mental health. However, if the student fails to follow these requirements, then the absences will become unexcused absences. Excused and unexcused absences while on required leave will be in compliance with WVSOM's institutional policy on attendance.
- 6.2 If a student self-refers under Section 5.3.1, any absences will be handled in accordance with WVSOM's institutional policy on attendance.
- 6.3 If a mental health evaluation is required under Section 5.3.2 and before the student is allowed to return to educational activities, the following must occur:

- 6.3.1 The student submits a request to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean to return to educational activities;
- 6.3.2 The student requests from the student's treating mental health provider documentation of the mental health evaluation findings, whether the student meets WVSOM's Health and Technical Standards, and any other information required by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean in a form acceptable to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean. All required information must be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean; and
- 6.3.3 If the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean determines that the documentation submitted is sufficient to make a decision that the student meets WVSOM's Health and Technical Standards, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean may approve the student's request to return to educational activities.

#### **ST 08-7. Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons**

- 7.1 If a student is placed on a leave of absence for mental health reasons, before the student is allowed to return to educational activities, the requirements set forth in Section 6.3 must be met.
- 7.2 If a student is unable to meet WVSOM's Health and Technical Standards, the student should request an extension under WVSOM's institutional policy on leave of absence.
- 7.3 Any leave of absence for mental health reasons will be in compliance with WVSOM's institutional policy on leave of absence.

#### **ST 08-8. Treatment Failure or Non-Compliance**

Students must comply with WVSOM requirements concerning student mental health. A student may be subject to administrative action, up to and including dismissal by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, if the student fails to:

- 8.1 Comply with WVSOM requirements concerning student mental health, including WVSOM's student mental health policies and procedures and any requirements mandated by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean;
- 8.2 Comply with treatment recommendations and provide all necessary documentation of compliance; or
- 8.3 Regain or maintain compliance with WVSOM's Health and Technical Standards.

#### **ST 08-9. Implementation of Policy**

This policy will be implemented using applicable WVSOM policies and/or procedures.