



SAVMA Duty Hours Guidelines

1. Regularly Scheduled Hours:

i. Adequate time for rest and personal activities should be provided. Adequate time for rest is defined as 10 hours free of duty between scheduled duty time including any duties the student may perform at home*.ⁱ

ii. Continuous on-site duty* should not exceed 16 hours. If continuous duty on-site spans a twenty-four hour period, a minimum consecutive fourteen hour break should be provided between duty shifts. Students may remain on duty for up to six additional hours (past 16 hours) to participate in didactic activities, transfer of patients, conduct outpatient clinics, and maintain continuity of medical and surgical care.ⁱⁱ

iii. For eight consecutive hours of work, a break of minimum thirty minutes for meals should be provided within the eight hour period. Students should coordinate these breaks with colleagues on the rotation in a manner to minimize disruption of the service. Faculty and house officers must help students time their breaks appropriately for their service. Students should have the option to take two thirty-minute breaks during a twelve-hour shift for appropriate clinical rotations.

iv. Students should be provided with one day in seven free from all clinical responsibilities, averaged over the course of the length of the rotation**. This should include on-site and on-call duties, as well as mandatory in-class time, and clinical duties performed at home.ⁱⁱⁱ

v. Duty hours should be limited to sixty hours per week, averaged over the course of the length of the rotation, inclusive of all on-call activities (when the student reports for onsite duty), mandatory class time, and clinical duties performed at home.^{iv}

vi. Students should be excused for medical, dental, mental health appointments, with allowance to make up hours.

2. On call* activities:

i. Continuous on-site duty, including on-call shifts, should not be scheduled to exceed twenty four consecutive hours. If continuous on-site and on-call clinical duties (when the student reports for onsite duty) lasts for a consecutive twenty-four hour period and lacks opportunity for rest and recovery, a fourteen hour rest period should be provided prior to the following shift.^v

ii. No new patients may be accepted after twenty-four hours of continuous duty.

iii. On-call shifts should occur no more frequently than two shifts per week averaged over the length of the rotation. On-call shifts should not occur so frequently that it interferes with student's personal time for rest and other obligations.^{vi}

3. Externship Travel:

i. Sufficient time must be allotted for travel to an externship. There should be a maximum of 10 hours of travel per day. Time should be allotted based on the distance of the externship from the student's residence.

4. Tracking Duty Hours:

i. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of their individual duty hours. If duty hour guidelines are exceeded the student should alert supervising faculty and house officers. Faculty and house officers should be aware of the duty hour guidelines and provide an atmosphere for students to advocate for their wellbeing in addition to evaluating areas where students can become more efficient, thus reducing the number of hours worked.

Updated 2024

*Duties performed from home = any work done away from the veterinary facility or field in connection to the rotation at the student's home. This may include but not limited to: paperwork, phone calls, meetings/rounds, and literature searching.

*On-site = any work done within the veterinary facility or field in connection to the rotation and away from the student's home

*On-call = student is no longer on-site, however is available to work by being contacted by rotation leaders to report to on-site duty

** Time averaged over length of the rotation = The regular duty hours, days off, and on call shifts should be averaged over the length of the rotation. This provides a fluid scheduling structure for both students and faculty meaning that students can work around any personal obligations during the rotation.

Examples:

For a three-week rotation, a student may work 70 hours the first week, 60 hours the second week, and 50 hours the third week. Total hours for that rotation would accumulate to 180 hours, averaging over 3 weeks would equal 60 hours per week.

For a two-week rotation, a student may not have any days free of duty the first week but have two days free of duty the second week. Two days free of duty the second week would average to one day in seven free for a two-week rotation.

For a two-week rotation, a student may take no on-call shifts the first week but four on-call shifts the second week totaling to four on-call shifts for the length of the rotation. Four on call shifts would average to two on call shifts for the length of the rotation.

ⁱ ACGME Guidelines selected the minimum requirement for time off between shifts at 10 hours to provide residents with adequate time for recovery between shifts based on the average sleep time for adults in America. "The ACGME 2011 Duty Hour Standard." ACGME, 2011.

People who sleep less than 6 hours per day are at higher risk of developing clinically defined burnout. Lin, Ro-Ting, et al. "Long working hours and burnout in health care workers: Non-linear dose-response relationship and the effect mediated by sleep hours - A cross sectional study." *Journal of Occupational Health* 2021; 63 (1). Doi: [10.1002/1348-9585.12228](https://doi.org/10.1002/1348-9585.12228)

Those with lower burnout spend more time with friends and family, and exercise more. Merck Animal Health 2023 Veterinary Wellbeing Study

Negative effects on patient care are seen by doctors to be caused by overwork and lack of sleep. Hours of sleep were significantly related to depression. Firth-Cozens J. Interventions to improve physicians' well-being and patient care. *Soc Sci Med.* 2001;52(2):215-222. doi:10.1016/S0277-9536(00) 00221-5

ⁱⁱ "The ACGME 2011 Duty Hour Standard." ACGME, 2011. "The ACGME's Approach to Limit Resident Duty Hours 12 Months After Implementation: A Summary of Achievements." *ACGME*, 2004, www.acgme.org/Portals/0/PFAAssets/PublicationsPapers/dh_dutyhourssummary2003-04.pdf.

Interns on an "intervention schedule" (maximal scheduled hours worked 60-63 hours and consecutive hours of work limited to approximately 16 hours) made significantly less medical errors than interns working on a traditional schedule (77-80 weekly hours worked and 24 consecutive

working hours). Landrigan, Christopher, et. al. "Effects of reducing intern's work hours on serious medical errors in intensive care units." *N Engl J Med*. 2004; 351(18). doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa041406

Systematic review of the effects of reducing medical resident shifts to 16 hours found that "reduction or elimination of resident work shifts exceeding 16 hours did not adversely affect resident education and was associated with improvements in patient safety and resident quality of life. Levine, Adam, et. al. "Effects of reducing or eliminating resident work shifts over 16 hours: A systematic review." *Sleep*. 2010; 33(8). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/33.8.1043>

Medical errors significantly increase in likelihood with extended workshifts. Lockley, Steven, et. al. Effects of Health Care Provider Work Hours and Sleep Deprivation on Safety and Performance. *The Joint commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety*. 2007; 33(11) doi: 10.1016/S1553-7250(07)33109-7

iii The ACGME 2011 Duty Hour Standard. <https://www.acgme.org/globalassets/pdfs/jgme-monograph1.pdf>

The AAVMC Guidelines For Veterinary Intern and Resident Wellbeing. <https://www.aavmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AAVMC-Wellbeing-InternResident-Guidelines-03.pdf>

iv The AAVMC Guidelines For Veterinary Intern and Resident Wellbeing states that program satisfaction correlated with limited or capped duty hours for house officers. The guideline for maximum duty hours should be limited to no more than 60 hours per week for veterinary residents.

The University of Vienna sent out a rotation stress questionnaire for veterinary students (RSQV) to assess rotation-specific stressors and stress. This study found that the number one cause of stress for veterinary students is the heavy workload and long working hours. Marsch, Stephan, et. al. Stressors and Stress of Veterinary Students during their Introduction to the Clinical Workplace. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education* 2023. doi: 10.3138/jvme-2023-0127

A study surveying US Oncologists on burnout and career satisfaction found that younger age and numbers of hours spent seeing patients each week were independently associated with burnout. Each additional hour spent seeing patients each week increased the risk of burnout by 2-4%. Shanafelt TD, Gradishar WJ, Kosty M, et al. Burnout and career satisfaction among US oncologists. *J Clin Oncol*. 2014;32(7):678-686. doi:10.1200/JCO.2013.51.8480

Medical errors reported by surgeons are correlated with the surgeons degree of burnout and quality of life. Shanafelt TD, Balch CM, Bechamps G, et al. Burnout and medical errors among American surgeons. *Ann Surg*. 2010;251(6):995-1000. doi:10.1097/SLA.0b013e3181bfdab3

As the largest attribution, tiredness was seen to cause 48.8% of the incidents where doctors provided a lowered standard of care to their patients, whilst 19.5% were seen as owing to the related category of pressure by overwork. Firth-Cozens J, Greenhalgh J. Doctors' perceptions of the links between stress and lowered clinical care. *Soc Sci Med*. 1997;44(7):1017-1022.

v The AAVMC Guidelines For Veterinary Intern and Resident Wellbeing states that house officers should have at least 14 hours free of clinical work and educational activity after 24 hours of continuous in-hospital work.

vi This statement is based on guidelines from the ACGME and AAVMC.

The ACGME 2011 Duty Hour Standard. <https://www.acgme.org/globalassets/pdfs/jgme-monograph1.pdf>

The AAVMC Guidelines For Veterinary Intern and Resident Wellbeing. <https://www.aavmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AAVMC-Wellbeing-InternResident-Guidelines-03.pdf>