

Professionalism

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The ACGME and the ABP require that programs evaluate the professionalism of residents.

This section includes:

- a brief introduction to the components of professionalism;
- a form that can be used to evaluate residents;
- vignettes that may be used to develop an educational program.

The American Board of Pediatrics believes that professional behavior is an integral and vital attribute of the competent pediatrician. Professionalism can be taught and should be evaluated. This section of the ABP Guide for Resident Evaluation has been created to assist Program Directors in developing ways to educate, evaluate, and emphasize professionalism in the context of their residency programs.

The core of professionalism comprises those attributes and behaviors that serve to maintain patient interests above physician self-interest. Professionalism extends beyond interactions with patients and their families, however. Professionalism also involves the relationships between physicians and other health professionals and the interactions between specialties and between professional organizations. It has implications for research activities and interactions with pharmaceutical companies. Professionalism should pervade all of our activities in medicine.

Professionalism should be enmeshed with residency education and training, and a commitment to professionalism should be an integral part of the professional lives of all physicians. Program Directors are in a key position to inculcate appropriate aspects of professionalism in their residents in training. In addition to addressing the components described below, Program Directors have an opportunity to guide residents in achieving balance between their professional and personal lives and in understanding appropriate boundaries between physicians and the people they serve. They must evaluate and provide feedback to their trainees regarding their behavior and attitudes.

Components of Professionalism

The Program Directors and Ethics Committees of the ABP developed a survey that was shared with the Association of Pediatric Program Directors in May 1999. The survey asked Program Directors to rate suggested components of professionalism that then could be used to create a tool to aid in the evaluation of residents in training. The following components of professionalism were selected by Program Directors.

1. **Honesty/integrity** is the consistent regard for the highest standards of behavior and the refusal to violate one's personal and professional codes. Honesty and

- integrity imply being fair, being truthful, keeping one's word, meeting commitments, and being forthright in interactions with patients, peers, and in all professional work, whether through documentation, personal communication, presentations, research, or other aspects of interaction. They require awareness of situations that may result in conflict of interest or that result in personal gain at the expense of the best interest of the patient.
2. **Reliability/responsibility** means being responsible for and accountable to others, and this must occur at a number of levels. First there must be accountability to one's patients, not only to children but also to their families. There must also be accountability to society to ensure that the public's needs are addressed. One must also be accountable to the profession to ensure that the ethical precepts of practice are upheld. Inherent in responsibility is reliability in completing assigned duties or fulfilling commitments. There must also be a willingness to accept responsibility for errors.
 3. **Respect for others** is the essence of humanism, and humanism is central to professionalism. This respect extends to all spheres of contact, including but not limited to patients, families, other physicians, and professional colleagues, including nurses, residents, fellows, and medical students. One must treat all persons with respect and regard for their individual worth and dignity. One must be fair and nondiscriminatory and be aware of emotional, personal, family, and cultural influences on patient well-being and patients' rights and choices of medical care. It is also a professional obligation to respect appropriate patient confidentiality.
 4. **Compassion/empathy** is a crucial component of the practice of pediatrics. One must listen attentively and respond humanely to the concerns of patients and family members. Appropriate empathy for and relief of pain, discomfort, and anxiety should be part of the daily practice of medicine.
 5. **Self-improvement** is the pursuit of and commitment to providing the highest quality of health care through lifelong learning and education. One must seek to learn from errors and aspire to excellence through self-evaluation and acceptance of the critiques of others.
 6. **Self-awareness/knowledge of limits** includes recognition of the need for guidance and supervision when faced with new or complex responsibilities. One must also be insightful regarding the impact of one's behavior on others and cognizant of appropriate professional boundaries.
 7. **Communication/collaboration** is critical to providing the best care for patients. One must work cooperatively and communicate effectively with patients and their families and with all health care providers involved.
 8. **Altruism/advocacy** refers to unselfish regard for and devotion to the welfare of others and is a key element of professionalism. Self-interest or the interests of other parties should not interfere with the care of one's patients and their families.

The evaluation of residents in training is a requirement of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Professionalism is one of the components of competence that the ACGME believes should be evaluated. The ABP similarly requests that Program Directors evaluate this component of their residents in training on the Verification of

Clinical Competence form completed for each resident who wishes to apply for board certification in pediatrics. To assist Program Directors in the evaluation of this aspect of competence, an evaluation form is provided that may be used or modified for use by programs. You may download the evaluation form and view it with Adobe Acrobat Reader. [Download evaluation form](#) (profform.pdf).

To download Adobe Acrobat Reader:



In addition, [a series of vignettes](#) is provided that may be used to encourage discussion and, in doing so, offer educational opportunities regarding professionalism. We hope you will find them useful. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged.

Acknowledgment

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