



*All pediatric subspecialties working together
for optimal child health*

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Please forward to your subspecialty society/section or allied organization as appropriate.

CoPS Recommends Delaying the Pediatric Fellowship Start Date Until July 7th and Moving Orientation to No Sooner than July 5th

Who made the recommendation?

In October 2012, CoPS formed an Action Team (AT) to examine the current start date for fellowship training. The AT included representatives of categorical and fellowship program director organizations in pediatrics, surgery and internal medicine as well as Designated Institutional Officials (DIOs). The group held monthly conference calls to discuss issues and recommend solutions. In association with APPD, CoPS conducted two stakeholder surveys, one in June 2014 of pediatric residents entering fellowship (number of respondents=439) and the other in August 2014 of pediatric fellowship programs directors (n=495). After reviewing the results, the AT, with the approval of CoPS, made their recommendations.

Why change the start date?

Graduating pediatric residents entering fellowship are expected to begin subspecialty training on July 1. As residency does not officially end until June 30, this can create conflict for those who must relocate and/or attend a mandatory orientation prior to July 1. In many programs, trainees utilize vacation to accommodate a move, but this is not always possible. The survey revealed that 69% of residents moved, usually with additional family, to another city for fellowship. Thirty-nine percent were required to attend orientation before June 30. With increasing numbers of residents pursuing fellowship and a fall match date, categorical program directors may have difficulty scheduling added time off for their residents finishing training. While the current system may work for fellowship program directors, residents and categorical program directors express significant concerns.

Why was July 7 recommended as the new start date?

When residents were asked to indicate a preferred start date, 6% indicated July 1, while 38% selected July 7, 39% July 15 and 17% August 1. Representing the view of the categorical program directors, [APPD has issued a statement](#) strongly supporting a start date of July 7. In the poll of fellowship program directors, 82% favored a start date of July 7 or later. Thus the AT recommended a July 7th start date.

When is the effective date?

In order to allow adequate time for implementation, the change will occur with the **2017** appointment year.

If fellowship starts one week later, when does it end?

Since the American Board of Pediatrics requires 36 months of training, the end date will be July 6.

Are the trainees aware that they will be without income for an additional week?

Yes. The residents were asked “if the pediatric fellowship start date were delayed until July 7th, would a gap in income for one week be acceptable to allow for the increased flexibility this delay would provide?” and 92% responded yes.

How does this affect trainee health insurance?

Under Federal law, trainees are eligible to purchase [COBRA](#) to continue their health coverage. There is an election period of at least 60 days (starting on the later of the date they are furnished the election notice or the date they would lose coverage) to choose whether or not to elect continuation coverage. As a result, COBRA may be purchased if needed. The cost of COBRA is federally regulated but the cost does include any previous employer contribution. Nonetheless, fellows will face a similar situation when they complete their training if they have a gap before starting their new position.

Will the delay in the start date be an issue for those on visas?

Those trainees who have J-1 visas, representing the vast majority, should not be affected since they have a [30 day grace period after training ends](#) before they depart the US. H1B visas on the other hand, are work visas and the issue is more complicated. If a new I-129 petition is filed before the end of residency by the new sponsoring institution (i.e. fellowship), [the individual would not have to leave the US](#). However, H1B visas are handled on a case by case basis.

What group regulates the fellowship start date?

There is no single organization that regulates the fellowship start date.

Are the DIOs aware of this recommendation?

It is likely that many are not. Since there is no one way to communicate with all DIOs, the AT is using several different methods to inform them. Nonetheless, fellowship and categorical program directors may need to contact their DIO directly.

Do any other specialties have a delayed fellowship start date?

Orthopedic Surgery fellowships have had a start date of August 1 for over 15 years without apparent issues. Recently, surgery has announced that beginning in 2016, surgical fellowships will start on August 1.

Read the [full statement](#) of the CoPS Fellowship Start Date Action Team or click [here](#) to view the survey data.