

Guidelines for Process Groups General Psychiatry Residency Program

Background

The General Psychiatry Residency program will offer optional Process Groups for PGY2 and PGY3 residents starting in academic year 2023/24. Process Groups in residency training bring 5-10 residents together with a group facilitator to support exploration of challenges encountered in training, to help deepen self-knowledge and relational awareness.¹ In response to a wellness needs assessment in the Psychiatry Residency Program (2020), as well as learning environment concerns highlighted in the program's 2020 Royal College accreditation review, Process Groups were piloted in 2022/23 for PGY2 residents at CAMH. Preliminary feedback from this pilot demonstrated that Process Groups support psychological safety and wellbeing, leading to the expansion of this initiative for all PGY2-3 residents in 2023/2024.

There is growing evidence that Process Groups promote social cohesion and overall wellbeing among physicians.² Within medical education, common factors of effective wellbeing initiatives include opportunities to connect with peers, and to access protected time to participate in sessions.³⁻⁵ Moreover, through local Needs Assessments conducted within the residency program (2018 and 2020), a key enabler of resident wellbeing was access to trusted faculty members for mentorship.

Process groups can help residents make sense of challenging experiences in the learning environment, through resonance from their peers and the group facilitators, which can support [positive professional identity formation](#) and empower trainees towards the numerous and nuanced challenges of physicianhood. Research on resident physician wellbeing demonstrates that the burdens of the learning environment are not equally shared amongst residents, and opportunities to mentalize peers' experiences will support a 'culture of wellbeing' amidst often imperfect learning environments.⁶

Educational Offering

Process groups will take place [once a month on Wednesday for 50min, between the Academic Half Day and Administrative & Psychotherapy](#) time. Groups will meet with a faculty and senior resident co-facilitator to debrief informally and confidentially about challenging cases, other clinical experiences and professional identity formation during training. Groups will take place over Zoom.

This experience is *optional*. This is in alignment with the [residency program's wellness strategy](#), which recognizes that 'one size does not fit all', and the importance of diverse offerings that occur at an individual, community and systems level.⁷ For residents who do choose to participate, they will be asked to make a commitment to attending monthly sessions (with exceptions for post-call days and vacation).

Purpose of Process Groups in the General Psychiatry Residency Program:

- To provide psychologically safe spaces to process and explore challenging experiences in training.
- To promote social cohesion and overall wellbeing among psychiatry residents.
- To provide informal mentorship from faculty and senior residents to PGY2/3 residents during a critical period of professional identity formation.

CanMEDS roles and competencies addressed:

- **Professional:** Support residents to recognize and regulate their own reactions in clinical encounters; Enhance personal wellbeing of residents.
- **Communicator:** Foster advanced communication skills for challenging encounters in training.
- **Scholar:** Apply concepts from psychotherapy literature and medical humanities to clinical encounters.

Learning Objectives for Residents:

- Describe and apply the concept of moral distress as it relates to psychiatric practice and residency training experiences.
- Reflect on your values, your path in medicine, and how these interact toward meaning making in your practice in psychiatry.
- Examine your professional identity as physician, future psychiatrist, and member of healthcare teams.

Guidelines/Frame for Process Groups:

1. All material discussed remains confidential.
2. The purpose of the group is not to provide therapy. Residents will not be sharing or processing deep personal material and facilitators will be aware of the limitations of a monthly group of professional peers. Although residents may share personally in response to their training experiences, they will also be encouraged to reflect on how vulnerable they wish to make themselves given the context.
3. Process group will not provide supervision or clinical advice for treatment – it offers a space to reflect on our reactions to our work
4. All group members will demonstrate respect for individuals' identities and strive to create an inclusive and culturally humble environment. This includes refraining from making assumptions about peoples' identities (eg. Sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, gender and accepting that ever person has different experience of oppression and privilege.) Be curious and speak from your own experience.

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