

Guidelines for Process Groups General Psychiatry Residency Program

Background

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

Since 2022, the Psychiatry Residency Program has piloted process groups as a means of supporting junior resident professional development. Based on evaluations of these pilot programs, we learned that process groups support psychologically safe spaces that support productive struggle and relatedly professional identity formation and wellbeing for residents.

Educational Offering

Process groups will take place [once a month on Wednesday for 50min, between the Academic Half Day and Administrative & Psychotherapy](#) time. Some groups may decide to schedule process groups during A&P time. Groups will meet with a faculty (+/-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 or in-person.

All PGY2s have the opportunity to participate in process groups. 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 their peers and the group facilitator to attend monthly sessions (with exceptions for post-call days and vacation). Regular attendance is important for group cohesion and psychological safety, which all group members contribute to.

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 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.

References

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