Dear NICHD investigators,

At this time I would like to provide you all with guidance regarding non-FTEs/trainees and unsatisfactory performance.

For situations in which a pre- or postdoctoral fellow is failing to perform at satisfactory levels, it is essential that both the investigator (mentor) and the fellow work closely with the NICHD Office of Education (OE) to address areas needing improvement. Importantly, all fellows must be notified in writing that their performance is unsatisfactory and such notification must specifically outline suggestions for achieving satisfactory levels of performance. Three to six months’ time should be allowed for the fellow to show improvement in these areas. This written notification must be coordinated with the OE Director.

The OE is available to assist in the development and implementation of plans for improvement, including helping to draft the notification of unsatisfactory performance, as well as establishing and facilitating regular meetings with the investigator and the fellow to assess improvement and to provide professional development counseling. The OE is also available to direct all parties to other appropriate counseling resources, including the NIH Office of the Ombudsman and the NIH Employee Assistance Program, on an as-needed basis.
Situations of Insufficient Improvement
In the event that improvements are insufficient and early termination is found to be absolutely necessary, NICHD follows the policy for early termination that is outlined in the NIH Sourcebook: twelve months’ written notice of the intention to terminate the appointment is standard practice and the final termination notice should include a plan to ensure that any remaining scientific activities are completed and the trainee has a career plan for a transition out of the NIH. For these situations, the one-year time starts when the intention to terminate letter is issued to the fellow in coordination with the OE. During this time, the fellow should work closely with the OE to address areas needing improvement, and when necessary, for support and guidance with their career planning as they transition out of the NIH.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this guidance.

Many thanks,
Erin

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