

Mental Health FAQs for Physicians

Am I allowed to practice medicine if I have been treated for a mental health diagnosis or substance use disorder?

Yes. In one study, 27% of medical students have had depressive symptoms and 10-12% of physicians have a substance use disorder. With treatment, countless physicians have had long, productive, and satisfying careers.

Am I required to report my mental and physical health diagnoses when applying for my state medical license?

Physicians with mental and physical health diagnoses can obtain a medical license in every state, but the process for doing so varies between states. States differ in how they ask about current versus historical diagnoses. How this information is handled also differs from state to state as listed on the application. Concerns about getting a medical license should never keep you from seeking treatment for a mental or physical health diagnosis.

The New Mexico license application asks: “Do you have or have you been diagnosed with an illness or condition which impairs your judgment or affects your ongoing ability to practice medicine in a competent ethical and professional manner?”

What mental health questions are asked on residency program applications?

There are no specific mental or physical health questions asked on ERAS residency or fellowship applications. The questions that may apply to mental or physical health diagnoses include:

- *Was your medical education/training extended or interrupted? If yes, please provide details [blank box].*
- *Are you able to carry out the responsibilities of a resident or a fellow in the specialties and at the specific training programs to which you are applying, including the functional requirements, cognitive requirements, interpersonal and communication requirements with or without reasonable accommodations? If no, please list your limiting aspect(s): [blank box]*

How should I explain a leave of absence on my residency or future job application?

Talk with a trusted advisor about what should be said and what does not need to be said. Always plan to be honest in your answers, but know that you aren't obligated to provide extensive details.

For example, it may be enough to provide information such as:

"I was on a medical leave of absence for __ months and returned to work with no restrictions."

Work with your advisor about how to prepare to answer questions about this on the application and in your interviews.