

# Boston Children's Hospital Research Fellows Policy Manual

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Research Fellows Manual has been established by the Office of Fellowship Training (OFT) at Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) for the benefit of all Postdoctoral Research Fellows engaged in research at the Hospital. Our goal is to help ensure that every Research Fellow has a positive, productive and rewarding training experience. This Manual furthers that goal by establishing minimum standards for the engagement of all Research Fellows conducting research at BCH, regardless of funding source or department. These standards are intended to ensure the consistent and equitable treatment of all Research Fellows. This Manual provides guidance and sets institutional standards for Principal Investigators, faculty sponsors, advisors, mentors, and others involved in hiring, managing, and/or mentoring of Research Fellows. This Manual also contains resources for career development and other support services available for Research Fellows.

Although this Manual is intended to set minimum standards for the engagement of all Research Fellows conducting research at BCH, PIs and Departments may deviate from the policies and guidelines described in this Manual, provided the change does not result in a Research Fellow receiving less than the minimum standards established by this Manual. In any case where a Research Fellow's grant entitles the Fellow to more generous terms than described in the Manual, the grant terms shall set the standard.

The Hospital expects all Postdoctoral Research Fellows, Principal Investigators and other faculty sponsors to follow the policies and guidelines in this Manual and for individual departments to exercise appropriate oversight to ensure those expectations are met. Institutional oversight of the policies and guidelines in this Manual also occurs through the OFT, Research Administration and the Department of Human Resources.

Research Fellows who are employees of BCH may qualify for certain additional benefits offered to BCH employees from time to time; nothing in this Manual shall be construed as limiting or modifying any BCH employee's rights or benefits under any BCH Policy.

Nothing in this Manual is intended to constitute a contract of employment between BCH and a Research Fellow or to create a legally enforceable promise by BCH of any kind. The policies and guidelines in this Manual are not contractual in nature, and do not create a contract between any Research Fellow and the Hospital. This Manual is not intended to and does not create any right to employment or an employment relationship with any Research Fellow who is not employed or funded by the Hospital. This Manual is subject to regular review and modification. BCH reserves the right to revise or terminate any part of the Manual at any time, and/or to depart from particular policies or guidelines when appropriate. This Manual is intended to comply with all applicable laws and regulations and may be modified from time to time to comply with changes in the law.

Anyone having questions or comments about any of the material in this Manual, should feel free to contact the Director of the OFT at 617-919-2959. We welcome your inquiries and perspective.

## II. DEFINITIONS

The following terms, as they appear in this Manual, shall mean:

**Research Fellow:** An individual who holds an advanced degree (PhD, MD, MD/PhD), has received a postdoctoral training status appointment as preparation for a full-time career in academia and/or research, and conducts research at BCH under the guidance of a Principal Investigator or other faculty mentor, sponsor, or advisor affiliated with BCH. Research Fellows are either Hospital Employees or Associated Personnel.

**Hospital Employee:** A Research Fellow who receives all or part of his/her compensation from the BCH and is paid through BCH payroll.

**Associated Personnel (AP):** A Research Fellow who is compensated by an institution or entity other than BCH and is not paid through BCH payroll.

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**Associated Personnel who are on NIH Training Grants:** Research Fellows who are on a NIH training grant (F32 or T32) are paid from Accounts Payable and are Associated Personnel and not BCH employees unless they also receive additional salary support from BCH making them BCH employees.

**Principal Investigator (PI):** A BCH faculty member who supervises the laboratory research and training of a Research Fellow.

## **III. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Research Fellows, like all members of the BCH community, are expected to uphold BCH's Standards of Conduct. These standards of conduct include, but are not limited to, non-discrimination, prohibition of sexual and other unlawful harassment, commitment to diversity, avoidance of conflict of interest, appropriate computer use, and prevention of violence. Research Fellows are subject to the BCH Intellectual Property Policy. All intellectual property generated during the fellowship is owned by BCH and must be disclosed to BCH as set forth in the IP Policy.

In order to uphold these standards, BCH has implemented a number of important policies. All members of the BCH community, including Research Fellows, are required to know and follow all policies establishing standards of conduct, including:

**Acceptable Use of Computer and Network Resources**

**Annual Health Screening**

**Children in the Workplace**

**Code of Conduct**

**Compliance Manual**

**Confidentiality of Patient, Personnel, and Hospital Information**

**Conflict of Interest**

**Diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action**

**Influenza Policy**

**Information Security Policy and Procedure Manual**

**Insider Trading Policy**

**Intellectual Property Policy**

**Laboratory Attire**

**On-Line Social Networking Policy**

**Safety (see also The Safety Manual)**

**Sexual Harassment and Discrimination**

**Smoking/Tobacco Use**

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**Solicitation, Distribution and Posting**

**Substance Abuse Prevention**

**Violence Prevention and Response**

**Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses**

## **IV. POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

### **A. *Becoming a Research Fellow at BCH***

BCH values the diversity of its community and is committed to maintaining a respectful environment where Research Fellows feel valued and supported. Individuals seeking a research fellowship at BCH, will not be discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, religion, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, age, disability, military or veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

All Research Fellows should receive a letter outlining the terms of their fellowship. This letter should describe the duties and responsibilities of the fellowship, the expected duration of the fellowship, salary and funding expectations, status (employee or associate personnel), benefits eligibility, and expectations and information about eligibility for HMS appointment.

Research Fellows who are not United States citizens or are not approved for lawful permanent residency are responsible to obtain the appropriate work authorization. Research Fellows, whether Associated Personnel or Hospital Employees, must work with the Hospital's Office of Immigration Services (OIS) to obtain clearance before the appointment begins.

Before beginning the fellowship, all Research Fellows must participate in and receive clearance through BCH's health screening and background check processes.

Research Fellows must attend all orientation and training sessions applicable to their fellowship. This may include Laboratory Safety, Occupational Health, Animal Facility requirements, Office of Fellowship Training Orientation, and other training. PIs must allow Fellows time to attend the appropriate sessions as soon as possible after their arrival.

### **B. *Performance Evaluations and Career Development***

Research Fellows must receive a written performance evaluation from their PI at least once during each Research Fellowship year. This written evaluation should be discussed at a formal annual meeting of the PI and Research Fellow. The office of the Vice President for Research Administration will track completion of these evaluations for all Research Fellows. Copies of the evaluations will be maintained in the Research Fellow's department file. The Independent Career Development (IDP) plan models found on the OFT website, the NPA website, and the Science Careers site my IDP are helpful evaluative tools.

### **C. *Time Off***

Research Fellows may take up to a total of 20 paid days off per academic year, exclusive of the official BCH holidays, to be used for vacations, illness or time off for personal or family needs; the amount of time off is prorated if the fellowship is less than 12 months in any academic year. Research Fellows must obtain prior approval for time off from their PI, and should make the request for time off as far in advance as possible. In cases of planned absences, PIs and Research Fellows should work together to ensure that time off needs can be met with minimum disruption to laboratory operations. Research Fellows should keep track of time taken. Time spent attending a scientific conference on behalf of the PI's lab is not considered paid time off.

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Unused time off may not be carried over into the following academic year. Time off does not have any cash value. Unused days off will expire at the termination of the research fellowship and will not be cashed out at the termination of the Fellowship.

Time off under this Section should be covered by a Research Fellow's primary grant or funding source. Research Fellows who come with their own funding should ensure in advance of their fellowship that the funding is sufficient to cover anticipated paid time off.

## ***Time Off for Training, Continuing Education and Professional Development***

Research Fellows should be provided with paid time off for training, continuing education courses, and professional development opportunities, exclusive of time spent at scientific conferences as a presenter. Subject to available funding, Research Fellows should receive up to a total of 5 paid days off each academic year for training, continuing education and professional development opportunities. Where a longer period of time is required, the time off may be combined across two academic years, provided that the total time off in a two year period does not exceed 10 days. Training, continuing education and professional development opportunities must be directly related to the fellowship and all requests must be approved in advance by the PI. Requests for time off should be made in writing to the respective PI as far in advance as possible.

Time off under this section does not have any cash value. Unused days off will expire at the termination of the research fellowship and will not be cashed out at the termination of the fellowship.

## **D. *Leave of Absence***

A Research Fellow may need to take a leave of absence during the fellowship. This section describes the expectations for Parenting Leaves and Medical Leaves of Absence for all Research Fellows. Research Fellows who are employed by BCH may also be eligible for additional benefits, beyond those described in this Manual; BCH employees should refer to the BCH Human Resources Manual for additional information about leaves of absence.

### **1. Parenting Leave**

#### **a) Time Off from the Fellowship for a Parenting Leave**

Research Fellows with at least six months of continuous service in the fellowship may take up to a total of twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave due to the birth or adoption of the Fellow's child (Parenting Leave). Parenting Leave must be taken contemporaneously with the birth or adoption of the child. Research Fellows should notify their PI at least thirty (30) days in advance of the need for a Parenting Leave, or longer if practicable. Research Fellows may, at their option, work part-time during a Parenting Leave; however, a PI may not require the Research Fellow to work during a Parenting Leave. Research Fellows are expected to return to their fellowship no later than 12 weeks after the start of their Parenting Leave; Research Fellows must inform their PI immediately of any changes in their return date.

Research Fellows are not expected or required to work during a Parenting Leave. Departments and Research Fellows should work collaboratively to ensure appropriate coverage and minimal disruption to laboratory operations during a leave.

#### **b) Financial Support during a Parenting Leave**

The Hospital recognizes the financial challenges researchers face when starting or growing a family during a fellowship. Research Fellows taking a Parenting Leave who are employed by the Hospital may be eligible for short-term disability insurance benefits through the Hospital's short-term disability insurance benefits plan. Hospital employees should contact the Hospital's Human

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Resources Department for information about short-term disability insurance eligibility, benefits and application requirements.

In addition to short-term disability insurance benefits, a Research Fellow on a Parenting Leave is eligible for financial support in the following circumstances:

- The Research Fellow is participating in a fellowship program with an anticipated duration of at least 24 months;
- The Research Fellow has at least 12 months of continuous service in the PI's lab at the time the Parenting Leave begins; and
- The Research Fellow plans to return to the lab

Research Fellows who are the birth parent or the primary caregiver of the newly born or newly adopted child are eligible for up to 8 weeks of base salary during their Parenting Leave. If the Research Fellow is eligible for short-term disability benefits through the Hospital, the salary support supplements the short-term disability payments such that the Research Fellow receives a total of 8 weeks of base salary as financial support during the Parenting Leave.

Unless prohibited by the terms of the grant, the Fellow's funding source should be used to cover the salary replacement during the Parenting Leave.

At the discretion of a department chair, the Research Fellow's department may elect to use discretionary funds to provide additional financial support to a Research Fellow during unpaid portions of a Parenting Leave.

## **2. Medical Leave**

Research Fellows, who have completed at least twelve (12) months of service and need time away from work because of a personal illness or injury, or the illness or injury of an immediate family member, may take an unpaid leave of up to 12 weeks in a 12 month period (Medical Leave). Medical Leave is unpaid. A Research Fellow may use available paid time off (see section (c) above) as salary replacement during a Medical Leave. If the Fellow has completed less than one year of service, medical leave can be granted at the discretion of the PI.

Except in emergencies or when the need for leave is not foreseeable, requests for Medical Leave must be made in writing to the Research Fellow's PI with at least thirty (30) days' notice before the date the leave is to begin. Research Fellows may be asked to provide medical documentation of the need for leave; such information should be provided to BCH's Occupational Health Services Department, not to the PI.

Research Fellows must remain in regular contact with their PIs during Medical Leave to report on their status and intention to return to work.

When returning from Medical Leave because of the Research Fellow's own illness or injury, the Research Fellow must provide the Hospital's Occupational Health Services Department with appropriate medical documentation indicating that the Research Fellow is able to resume work.

A Research Fellow who does not return from Medical Leave after the approved leave period, and has not been approved to take an extended leave of absence, will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

## **3. Research Fellows on Visas**

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Any extended leave of absence may have immigration implications for Research Fellows who are not U.S. residents or citizens. Research Fellows who work at the Hospital on an immigration visa should seek advice regarding the potential immigration implications of taking a leave.

## **E. Salary Policy**

Research Fellows must receive a total salary from all sources equal to or greater than each year of the NIH/NRSA salary scale, commensurate with experience. The Hospital expects PIs to ensure that their Research Fellows are compensated fairly, based on this salary scale, throughout the appointment. Requests for salary equity adjustments will be reviewed on a case by case basis by Human Resources in partnership with the Department Chief/Director.

When a Research Fellow meets performance expectations, as documented by the annual performance evaluation, his/her compensation should be adjusted each year at the time of re-appointment, with annual increases in accordance with the NIH/NRSA salary scale and commensurate with experience.

Effective July 1, 2016, Research Fellows may not rely on personal funds in order to satisfy the NIH/NRSA salary minimum for their PGY level. "Personal funds" means self-funding through private financial support unaffiliated with a grant, foundation, government or institution. Limited exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis with approval from the Chief of the Department, the Vice-President of Research Administration and the Vice-President of Human Resources upon a showing of good cause.

**Part-Time Appointments:** Ordinarily, postdoctoral appointments are made on a full-time basis and Research Fellows are paid for full-time work. In the event of a fractional appointment, the Research Fellow and PI should agree upon an effort schedule and prorated salary commensurate with the appointment. The PI must document the terms of the fractional appointment with the OFT and, to the extent applicable, confirm that the terms are consistent with the rules of the Research Fellow's funding source and visa requirements.

## **F. Benefits**

Hospital Employees may be eligible for health and dental insurance; short-term and long-term disability insurance; and other benefits made available to the Hospital's employees from time to time. Hospital Employees are encouraged to review the Employee Benefits Program Booklet and direct any questions regarding the benefits for which they are eligible to the BCH Service Center.

## **G. Termination**

**Voluntary Termination:** Research Fellows who elect to leave before the end of their fellowships are asked to provide their PI with a minimum of four weeks' written notice.

**Termination Due to Lack of Funding:** At times, the funding source for a Research Fellow's compensation may be reduced or terminated due to insufficient funds. In the event that sufficient funding cannot be secured to continue the fellowship, PIs should provide Research Fellows with at least 90 days' advance notice, absent extraordinary circumstances. . Where 90 days' notice is not feasible, PIs should provide as much written notice as possible. PIs should keep their Research Fellows informed of developments that could negatively impact the ability of the laboratory to support the fellowship program and/or laboratory operations.

**Expiration of Term of Appointment:** As a Research Fellow approaches the end of the term of his/her appointment as set forth in the Offer Letter, the PI should provide a written reminder at least 6 months before the date the term is scheduled to end. If a PI and Research Fellow wish to extend the appointment beyond the original term, the PI should submit an Extension Request form to the Division or Department Chief no later than four (4) months prior to the expiration of the term.

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***Termination Due to Lack of Productivity:*** PIs and Research Fellows are expected to work collaboratively to establish productivity expectations. The PI is responsible for determining whether or not the Research Fellow's productivity expectations are being met. To the extent the PI has concerns about performance, the PI is encouraged to meet with the Research Fellow and discuss the situation. If the Research Fellow does not show improvement, and the PI decides to terminate the Research Fellow due to lack of productivity, in general, the PI will endeavor to provide the Research Fellow with 90 days written notice of termination. This letter must be shared with the Division, Department or Program Manager, the Office of Fellowship Training and with a representative from Human Resources. This notice of termination should state the opportunities for improvement which if achieved during the notice period could result in the rescinding of the termination notice. The PI and Fellow should meet at timely intervals during this 90 day period to review progress towards improvement. If improvement does not occur during the notice period as determined by the PI, the PI will request that Human Resources begin the formal process of termination.

The Office of Fellowship Training provides counseling to Research Fellows, and Fellows facing possible termination are encouraged to speak with Lu-Ann Pozzi or Dr. Jordan Kreidberg about their respective situations.

***Termination with Cause:*** On rare occasions, the Hospital may deem it necessary to terminate a Research Fellow's relationship with cause for reasons including, but not limited to: poor attendance; failure to collaborate with or work effectively with colleagues and staff; or failure to fulfill the duties of the position. Research Fellows should be aware that certain actions may result in suspension or termination without notice, including but not limited to breach of confidentiality, research misconduct, and violation of Hospital policies, procedures, and standards, violation of applicable laws and regulations, and/or conduct that is deemed to be detrimental or disruptive to Hospital operations.

***Transition:*** Research Fellows are expected to work closely with their PI to complete outstanding research tasks and plan for a smooth transition. Before leaving the Hospital, each Research Fellow is responsible to provide written notification to the PI regarding the status of research, including the status and location of all materials, data, medical and other records, consent forms, and any other information related to the research conducted by the Research Fellow during his/her appointment. Research Fellows are subject to BCH's Intellectual Property Policy and execute a Participation Agreement upon beginning their fellowship. Children's owns all research notebooks, lab books, materials, data, records and any other information related to the research conducted by the Research Fellow during the fellowship. At the termination of the fellowship, all such materials must remain at BCH. If the Research Fellow wishes a copy of any information, he/she may request such copy from his/her PI.

The above guidelines are not intended to and shall not be construed to supersede any Hospital policy or HMS policy related to termination of employment, at will employment, intellectual property or other terms and conditions relating to employment, discipline or termination. All Research fellowships at BCH are subject to the continued availability of sufficient funding to meet the NIH minimum for the position, the Research Fellow meeting the productivity and performance expectations for the fellowship, and compliance with Hospital policies.

## **i. Retaliation**

It is prohibited to retaliate against a Research Fellow, PI or staff person for using or requesting to use any of the provisions in the Fellows Manual or for using or seeking to use any of the policies of the Hospital. Giving an inaccurate and malicious reference, interfering with career advancement, improper elimination of authorship attribution, abrupt termination of the fellowship, and withholding of grant support, with the intent to retaliate against a Research Fellow are prohibited.

Any employee, PI, or Research Fellow who believes he/she has been subjected to retaliation should contact the Director of the OFT. If the individual does not feel comfortable bringing the concern to the OFT for any reason, the individual may contact the Office of General Counsel at Boston Children's Hospital or the Director of Employee Relations. Complaints of retaliation will be promptly investigated and if the Hospital determines

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that retaliation has occurred, prompt and appropriate corrective action will be taken against the offender as deemed appropriate by the Hospital under the circumstances.

## **V. ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INFORMATION**

### **a. Expectations of Principal Investigators**

Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and supervising the training and scholarly pursuits of Research Fellows. In that capacity, faculty mentors should articulate clear goals, objectives, and expectations of the training and the responsibilities of Research Fellows working in their laboratory. Faculty mentors are expected to meet regularly with the Research Fellows, to communicate expectations and to provide timely feedback of the Research Fellow's progress and performance.

Additional responsibilities include:

- Detailing Research Fellow's responsibilities, expectations, and conditions of appointment in the initial offer letter
- Mentoring Research Fellows in fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations
- Fostering the professional development of Research Fellows towards achieving independence
- Providing career advice and job placement assistance to Research Fellows
- Administration and participation in an individual career development plan and an annual meeting to discuss the IDP. Sample styles of IDPs can be found on the OFT website, the NPA website and on Science Careers my IDP.

### **b. Expectations of Postdoctoral Research Fellows**

Research Fellows actively participate in the research enterprise of BCH under the supervision of a faculty mentor. Specific research expectations and training commitments should be established in collaboration with the faculty mentor and should be outlined as early as possible. Research Fellows are responsible for being proactive in their career development and research training. A Fellow, in cooperation with his or her faculty mentor, should develop an individual career development plan (IDP). The IDP should include yearly meetings with the faculty mentor to discuss the meeting of milestones and to communicate expectations for the following year. Samples of IDPs can be found on the OFT website, the NPA website and on Science Careers my IDP.

All materials and data collected during a Research Fellow's training at the BCH belong to BCH, and not to the individual Fellow. Data should not be removed from the lab or shared outside the lab in any form (including but not limited to grants, manuscripts, or conference presentations) without prior discussion and consent from the PI/Faculty Mentor.

At the time of departure from the BCH, the Fellow is responsible for notifying the faculty mentor and/or other departmental staff in writing of the disposition of Research Records, including the location of all materials and data, medical records, consent forms and any other recorded information related to the research conducted at the hospital. All Research Fellows at BCH agree to read and abide by the Bylaws, rules, regulations and policies of the Professional Staff and of the Hospital.

Additional responsibilities of Research Fellows include, but are not limited to:

- Conscientious discharge of assigned duties



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- Adherence to strict research integrity as defined by the hospital's Research Integrity Policy
- Compliance with established laboratory practices and BCH standards
- Adherence to policies and regulations involving biohazards, human subjects or animals, and radiation
- Collegial conduct towards co-workers and laboratory staff

## **VI. PROBLEM RESOLUTION**

Research Fellows are strongly encouraged to make reasonable and diligent efforts to resolve any conflicts or grievances through open discussions with their PI and/or Department Chair. If such efforts do not resolve the conflict or grievance to the Research Fellow's satisfaction, or if the conflict or grievance is not susceptible to resolution in this manner, the Research Fellow is encouraged to seek assistance from other sources. Examples of such conflicts or grievances may include, but are not limited to: a PI's failure or refusal to follow these policies, disagreements over authorship, challenging interpersonal relations in the Lab, and other difficulties in the Lab requiring assistance with conflict resolution.

Research Fellows requiring assistance with conflict and problem resolution should contact the Fellows' Program Manager, Lu-Ann Pozzi or the Director of The Office of Research Fellowship Training by calling 617-919-2959 or sending an e-mail to Lu-Ann.Pozzi@childrens.harvard.edu or Jordan.Kreidberg@childrens.harvard.edu.

Assistance with problem resolution within BCH may also be obtained by contacting the Vice-President of Research Administration at 617-919-2272.

To make a complaint about sexual or unlawful harassment or for assistance with an employee relations matter, Research Fellows should contact the Director of Employee Relations by calling 857-218-3068

In addition to BCH resources, Research Fellows may bring their concerns to the Harvard Medical School Ombudsperson Office. The Ombud, Melissa Broderick, can be reached at (617) 432-4040 or by e-mail at melissa\_brodrick@hms.harvard.edu.

## **VII. RESOURCES AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **a. Career Development**

[OFT website](#)  
[Minority Biomedical Scientists of Harvard](#)  
[International Science and Health Network](#) (At Harvard)  
[Graduate Women in Science \(GWIS\)](#)  
[Association of Women in Science \(AWIS\):](#)  
[Women Entrepreneurs in Science and Technology](#) (WEST)  
[Science Shaping Our World](#) (SHOW)  
[Biotech Tuesday](#)  
[Longwood Toastmasters](#)  
[Harvard Chinese Student and Scholar Association](#)  
[GSAS Harvard Biotech Club](#)  
[Harvard Graduate Consulting Club](#)  
[Massachusetts Biotech Council](#)

### **b. Housing**

[OFT Website](#)  
[Harvard Housing Office](#)  
[MIT Euro Club](#)

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## c. Transportation

[The MBTA and Commuter Rail](#)

[Zip Car](#)

[Masco](#)

[Logan International Airport](#)

**Fellows who also have clinical responsibilities and who are post-call after a 24+ hour shift can take a free taxi.** Contact your fellowship coordinator or Tery Noseworthy in the Graduate Medical Education (GME) Department for further details.

### **CommuteWorks**

CommuteWorks is a service provided by MASCO and Children's Hospital to provide free information about commuting alternatives to the Longwood Medical area. For more information call 617-632-2796 or visit the [website](#)

### **SmarTraveler**

SmarTraveler is a service provided to the community with input from community members. It includes information about Boston area traffic and MBTA up-to-date information. Visit the [website](#)

## d. Information for International Research Fellows

[Office of Immigration services](#)

## e. PostDoc Associations

[Boston Children's Hospital Postdoc Association](#)

[National Postdoc Association](#)- Free affiliate membership to postdocs at sustaining member institutions

[Harvard Medical School/Harvard School of Dental Medicine Postdoctoral Fellows Association](#) open to all affiliate postdocs

## f. Work and Family Support

[BCH Human Resource](#) site

[OFT website](#)

[Children's Employee Services](#)

[Employee Assistance Program](#)

[Childcare](#)

[Office of Work and Family](#)

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