The Difficult Learner: 
Best Practices in Recognition to Remediation

APPD Forum for Fellowship Program Directors at PAS 2017

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• For if I accept you as you are, I will make you worse. However, if I treat you as though you are what you are capable of becoming, I help you become that.

- Goethe
Timeline:

• Introduction: *What, Why and How*
• **Activity 1:** Goals of Remediation
  – Pair Share Discussion
  – Use SMART template to create goals
  – Report back to large group
• Presentation: Legal considerations
• **Activity 2:** Non-renewal/Termination
  – Intro to activity and packets
  – Simulation activity
  – Report back to large group
• Wrap Up
Remediation:

• A process of learner-focused, team-facilitated improvement or correction of a performance deficit.
Quick Query

• How many of you have a problematic or struggling learner under your supervision right now?

• How many of you have had a difficult learner under your supervision since you’ve been in your current position?
Figure 1. Percentage of 151 learners with each type of deficit by level of training, University of Colorado School of Medicine remediation program, 2006-2012. Although trends emerged among the learners, the only statistically significant finding was that mental well-being difficulties were more common in medical students (P = .03). Most learners had more than 1 of the 10 deficiencies studied.

72 Med students
65 residents
14 fellows or attendings
General Strategies: Recognition

• Detection
  – Early: tepid evaluations, verbal comments, eliciting informal feedback and self-assessments, peer dissatisfaction
  – Late: Formal evaluations, end of rotation assessments, failing exams, written reports of difficulties

• Diagnosis of specific deficits
  – Direct observation of the learner in action is most helpful
  – Assessment of all competencies, expect more than one deficit
  – Careful, open, motivational interview of the learner, engage best members for a remediation team.
General Strategies: Remediation

• Directed action for remediation
  – Shared model of assessment, goals, measurable outcomes and timeline, i.e. competency based milestones.
  – Documentation (focused review, performance alert, supplemental ILP)

• Three Key Elements of Remediation
  – Deliberate Practice by the Learner
  – Feedback (advising, mentoring, constructive critique)
  – Documentation
Pearls

➤ Expect only excellence

➤ Start focused learning and remediation as early as possible

➤ Interview the learner, look for external and internal impediments to best performance, insight and a desire to improve

➤ Recruit others to build a team, try to get someone outside of your division/department to help

➤ Clear goals with measurable outcomes

➤ Document, document, document

➤ Have learner do a written assessment of initial process and reassessments to ensure clear shared understanding of goals and progress.