



CIR/SEIU Healthcare & Resident Physician Work Hours

What is CIR?

The Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR), founded in 1957, is the nation's largest and oldest union of resident physicians. CIR represents more than 13,000 resident physicians in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Washington, D.C., Florida, California, New Mexico, and Puerto Rico. CIR is affiliated with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represents more than 2 million employees, including 1 million in the healthcare field. CIR is run by, and for, resident physicians, who are elected in each region to serve on the Executive Committee.

Resident physicians have graduated from medical school and then train for 3-8 years in their chosen specialty. They provide 24/7 care in the nation's teaching hospitals, under the supervision of senior physicians.

CIR and Work Hours

Reducing resident physicians' brutally long work hours has been a CIR goal since our early years. In 1975, ground-breaking contract agreements eliminated the ubiquitous every other night call for 2,000 CIR members in New York City's public and private hospitals. These were the first hour limits of any kind in the U.S.

In 1989, CIR was at the forefront of the political push that created the first and only state work hour limits – the New York State Department of Health 405 Regulations.

In 2001, CIR joined with the American Medical Student Association and Public Citizen to file a petition before the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and helped introduce federal work hour legislation.

The pressure from these actions was instrumental in convincing the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) to establish its first ever across-specialty limit on hours in 2003.

But shifts that can last up to 30 hours (24 + 6) and workweeks of up to, and beyond, 80 hours a week, are still too long. Research shows that fatigue leads to deterioration in physician performance. It is well past time to move to a safer workplace for patients, because medical errors increase due to chronic sleep deficit, and for the resident physicians themselves, who are at higher risk of needle stick injuries and car crashes.

CIR's Executive Committee supports resident physician work hours of no more than 16 hours, based on the now overwhelming evidence from sleep research. For more information, visit the Policy section of our website at www.cirseiu.org.