

Absence Due to Workplace Issues/Stress

In cases where **workplace issues/stress** is contributing to an employee's absence, sick leave is payable when there is identifiable, verifiable medical evidence of illness/injury. As early as is medically possible, during an employee's absence involving workplace issues/stress, the appropriate representative from Human Resources will facilitate discussions between the employee and the manager. During these discussions, the Occupational Health Nurse will provide medical clarification/guidance and support. CUPE 793, Faculty or Staff Associations may be involved if the member wants their support.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the **employee** to actively engage in the return to work process:

- Be available for phone calls/meeting requests by the Disability Advisor or Occupational Health Nurse (unless alternative arrangements have been made). Failure to be available may result in disruption of sick leave benefits
- Inform his/her doctor that early and safe return to work opportunities are available to assist you with your workplace issues/stress
- Contact their Human Resources Advisor, when appropriate, to begin the facilitated return to work process
- Maintain regular contact with his/her manager/supervisor regarding the possible return to work date which may include modified work and/or other accommodations unless otherwise arranged by the Disability Advisor
- Provide the Disability Advisor or Occupational Health Nurse with identifiable/verifiable **medical*** information supporting absence from work (medical should indicate first day absent, nature of condition, expected return to work date and any limitations or restrictions). Forms are located at: http://www.hr.uwaterloo.ca/forms/phys_release.pdf
- Participate in facilitated discussions leading to a safe, early return to work in a timely manner
- Consult with the available Waterloo Resources as needed
- Be aware, failure to actively engage in the Return to Work process may result in discipline, departmental decision to withhold pay and possible dismissal

It is the responsibility of the **manager/department** head to:

- Actively engage in the return to work process in a timely manner as described by Human Resources
- Contact their Human Resources Advisor to discuss the workplace issues and work with the Advisor to begin the facilitated return to work process
- Maintain regular contact with the Disability Advisor/Human Resources Advisor as appropriate
- Participate in discussions leading to a safe, early return to work in a timely manner
- Facilitate appropriate accommodation where necessary which may include modified work/hours (in most cases the accommodations will be temporary)
- Understand and respect the employee's right to not share **medical*** information with manager/department head
- Maintain the confidentiality of any **medical*** information which is shared by the employee

- Document the expectation of duties/hours in the Return to Work meeting
- Facilitate and promote a supportive return to work environment including the employee's co-workers
- Monitor the progress of the employee, meet with him/her regularly to ensure the return to work plan is progressing towards a successful, safe return
- Consult with the available Waterloo Resources as needed

It is the responsibility of the **Disability Advisor** to:

- Maintain regular contact with the employee, Occupational Health Nurse, Human Resources Advisor and the manager regarding progress and possible return to work date
- Maintain the confidentiality of the employee's **medical*** information
- Ensure the employee is aware of sick leave/LTD benefits in relationship to workplace issues/stress. It is Waterloo's experience that cases involving workplace issues/stress are not accepted by LTD
- In some cases within the early weeks of absence, Early Referral Forms from our carrier Great West Life Assurance Company will be sent to the employee for completion. These must be completed and returned in a timely manner
- Coordinate a safe, early return to work by working with the employee, manager/supervisor, Human Resources Advisor and Occupational Health Nurse
- Facilitate/promote/support the return of the employee to his/her department with any required accommodation of duties/hours

It is the responsibility of the **Occupational Health Nurse** to:

- Maintain regular contact with the employee regarding his/her health condition
- Maintain the confidentiality of the employee's **medical*** information
- Manage the employee's **medical*** documentation/file including clarifying health information through the employee's health care providers when indicated
- Provide early intervention to assist employees in achieving optimum level of functioning
- Refer the employee to their Human Resources Advisor to discuss the workplace issues
- Refer employee to Waterloo Resources as needed and recommend appropriate off campus community resources
- Evaluate, in consultation with the employee's health care providers **when necessary**, the employees readiness to begin facilitated discussions
- Attend the discussions with the employee to provide medical perspective and support when necessary
- Actively participate in the discussions of the causes and possible solutions to the workplace stress

In workplace issues/stress situations, the **Human Resources Advisor** has the responsibility to:

- Meet with the manager/department head prior to the facilitated discussion in order to understand the concerns of the manager/department head and outline the expected goals of the facilitated discussion
- Meet with the employee prior to the facilitated discussion in order to understand the concerns of the employee and outline the expected goals of the facilitated discussion

- Facilitate the discussion regarding the causes and possible solutions to this workplace stress among the employee, manager and Occupational Health Nurse (and CUPE 793, Staff or Faculty Associations if requested by the employee)

NOTE:

In some situations, a performance issue may be present. In these situations the manager is expected to address performance issues with the employee using progressive, corrective actions in a timely manner. This action would include verbal counselling, corrective warning letters and offering help such as providing accommodation – as long as improvement is occurring.

*** The University of Waterloo adheres to PHIPA (Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004) and all other relevant legislation including the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1990. All medical information provided is confidential. The employee is not obligated to share medical information with his/her manager/department head. However the employee must provide appropriate medical to the Occupational Health Nurse, Health Services and/or Disability Advisor, Human Resources in order to support payment of sick leave and application for long-term disability.**