



GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES RETURNING FROM MEDICAL LEAVES

Returning to work after a medical leave can be challenging for many people. It is normal to have some difficulties in making this transition. Experiencing both physical and emotional symptoms during this process is common. Below are some things you may want to consider as you plan your return to work. Thinking about these things ahead of time may help you return to work smoothly. Please note: some suggestions may not apply to your situation.

PRIOR TO RETURNING TO WORK

Consider these coping skills to deal with stress.

Get support from others.

- Talk to people who you trust about your frustrations, feelings, and concerns.
- Inform them when you simply need them to listen. Having your concerns acknowledged can help.
- Engage with people who share your illness/condition. This can help you gain information and support.

Pay attention to your mood.

- Monitor your ability to take pleasure in your usual interests and hobbies. Are you generally losing interest in these things? Are you feeling more anxious or irritable than usual? These may be signs to seek additional support.
- Recognize changes in your mood, especially feeling down, sad, or low.

- Watch for symptoms of fatigue.
- You may want to talk with your healthcare professional about these symptoms if they persist.

Watch for worries and anxiety.

- Recognize feelings of nervousness about returning to work. Does this nervousness keep you from doing your usual activities?
- Identify whether you are concerned about what others think of you when you return to work.

Observe your thoughts.

- Are you feeling shame or embarrassment about your absence? Sometimes identifying your thoughts and worries can reduce their severity.
- Practice positive, logical self-talk.
- Take note of negative thoughts about yourself, your condition, and others.

Assess your physical pain and symptoms.

- Watch for the impact that physical pain may have on you. For instance, does pain make you more irritable or moody?
- Think about things that may make pain or physical symptoms easier for you.

Educate yourself about your illness and treatment options.

- Do you understand your medical orders and treatment recommendations?
- Does your healthcare professional have any concerns about your return to work?
- Do you understand your medication regimen?
- Are you following through with your healthcare professional's orders?
- Are you worried about your long-term health? If so, try to identify the specific concerns. This might lead you to practical solutions.
- Monitor your sleep pattern. Do you have any concerns about the quality or quantity of your sleep? If so, share this information with your healthcare professional.
- Have you gained weight or had changes in your appetite?

Get organized. Keep a file on all your insurance claims, dates, payments received, and payments you have made.

AFTER YOUR RETURN TO WORK

Continue to consider the previous suggestions even after you return to work.

Connect with co-workers whom you trust and can support you.

Consider what to say to co-workers when you return.

- Rehearse these comments beforehand.
- You are not required to disclose details about your health condition.
- You may want to consider the following examples:
 - "I had some medical procedures done."
 - "I was out on doctor's orders."
 - "I had some health issues that I had to take care of."
 - "I had a medical condition that was being looked at."

If possible, enlist the support of your supervisor.

Prepare for your discussion with your supervisor by making a list ahead of your conversation. Remember to ask or discuss the following questions:

- What changes have occurred while you were out?
- Have there been any staff changes?

- Are there any new job assignments or expectations for your job?
- Are there any new policies or procedures that you should know?
- Discuss any considerations you may need to return to work.

For more information and assistance with returning to work following an illness or injury, contact the [Office of Counseling and Workplace Resilience](#) (OCWR; for Michigan Medicine staff and faculty) and the [Faculty and Staff Counseling and Consultation Office](#) (FASCCO; for Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Flint campus staff and faculty).

OTHER RESOURCES

- For Campus Faculty and Staff, contact the [SSC Contact Center](#) at (734) 615-2000 for help with questions about benefits or payroll.
- For Michigan Medicine Faculty and Staff, contact the HR Solutions Center at (734) 647-5538.
- For information and resources to help staff and supervisors with requesting a medical leave of absence or an extension of a previously granted medical leave of absence, consult the [Leave of Absence Toolkit](#).
- For other resources related to an employee's long-term absence, visit [Resources for Managing Absences Due to Injury or Illness](#).

QUESTIONS

For counseling and other resources to help faculty, staff, and supervisors with the transition back to work, contact the university's mental health teams for confidential, short-term counseling, consultation, information, and referrals.

Campus faculty and staff, contact the Faculty and Staff Counseling and Consultation Office (FASCCO). Call (734) 936-8660 or email fascoco@umich.edu.

Michigan Medicine faculty and staff, contact the Office of Counseling and Workplace Resilience (OCWR). Call 734-763-5409 or email counseling@med.umich.edu.