

Guide for Supervisors of Employees Returning from Medical Leaves

**A collaborative guide from Work Connections and
the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program 734 936-8660**

Introduction: The process of working with an employee returning to work after a medical leave can be challenging at times, for both an employee and their supervisor. Normally all parties have some concerns and anxieties about what is the best way to handle the reentry. Following are some general recommendations to consider before and during the transition back to work for an employee which may make the situation easier for all parties. We encourage you to consider these ahead of time if possible, and to consult one of our offices if you have any particular concerns in any given situation.

Prior to an Employees Return to Work

- At some point during an employee's leave call them and wish them well. At this juncture the question is not for you to say "hey when are you coming back, but to just say "anything I can do for you". Research has shown that communication from a supervisor to an employee while they are on leave is one of the most positive determinants to a successful return to work transition.
- Collect and assimilate all departmental communications that have transpired during the employees absence
- Make a written list of any, if applicable, changes in an employees work assignments
- If at all possible assign a coworker (buddy system) to review with the returning employee what changes occurred from their perspective while absent
- Talk with Work Connections to see if any accommodations are required
- Develop your own checklist of expectations, with estimated timetables that you can subsequently review with the employee
- Check with your Unit HR representative (or central HR representative) as to any particular concerns they may have
- Consider what the priorities that you need them to address, so that they will know your expectations, with appropriate timetables.

At a Return to Work Transition Meeting and during first week of employees return

- Acknowledge to the employee that it is normal for them to have some anxieties and questions about their return to work.
- Acknowledge that you are not going to divulge (or have) any medical diagnostic or personal medical information about their leave or condition.

- Provide the employee with the compilation of the communications and staffing changes (if any) that have occurred within the department while they were on leave.
- Assign them to meet formally with each other unit/department member to get an update from them on what they believe are significant changes and occurrences while they were on leave. Assign a completion date for this.
- Consider if feasible, alternate work hours if that will assist with the employees return to work transition.
- Set up some regular "check in" meetings to check status and give encouragement and feedback.

