



GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS OF EMPLOYEES RETURNING FROM MEDICAL LEAVES

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. Typically, all parties have some concerns and anxieties about what is the best way to handle the re-entry. Following are some general recommendations to consider before and during the transition back to work for an employee. We encourage you to consider this guide ahead of time if possible, and to consult the Mental Health Counseling and Consultation Services teams if you have any particular concerns in any given situation.

PRIOR TO RETURNING TO WORK

At some point during an employee's leave, call them and wish them well. Instead of asking "when are you coming back?" you might ask "Is there 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 summarize all departmental communications that have transpired during the employee's absence.
- If applicable, make a list of any changes in the employee's work assignments.
- If possible, assign a coworker to review with the returning employee changes that may have occurred during the employee's absence.
- Develop your own checklist of expectations, with estimated timetables that you can subsequently review with the employee.
- Check with your Unit HR representative, Michigan Medicine HR Business Partner, or central HR representative about any particular concerns the employee may have.
- Consider the priorities you need them to address, so that they will know your expectations, with appropriate timetables.

WHEN THE EMPLOYEE RETURNS TO WORK

At a Return to Work transition meeting and during the first week of the employee's return:

- Acknowledge to the employee that it is normal for them to have some anxieties and questions about their return to work.
- Reassure the employee that you are not going to receive or share 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 the employee to meet formally with their team members to get an update from them on what they believe are significant changes and occurrences while they were on leave.

Assign a completion date:

- If feasible, consider alternate work hours if that will assist with the employee's return to work transition.
- Set up some regular check-in meetings to check status and give encouragement and feedback.

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](#).
- Share the "[Guide for Employees Returning from Medical Leaves](#)" with your team member.



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 fascco@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.