

## MEDICAL LEAVE

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Medical leave is available for students who, due to documented serious physical or psychological illness, need to leave the College during the semester without completing their course work or to withdraw from the College for no longer than two consecutive semesters. Medical leave may be voluntarily requested by a student or, in certain circumstances, may be determined to be required for a student when the student's psychological or medical condition renders him or her a threat to the safety, health, or well-being of any person or of the campus community, or causes a significant disruption of the educational and other activities of the College community.

Medical Leave, whether voluntary or required, is not a substitute for appropriate disciplinary action although disabilities may be considered mitigating factors in a disciplinary proceeding. A student suffering from a medical or psychiatric disorder who is accused of a disciplinary violation will not be exempted from the disciplinary process unless, as a result of the medical or psychiatric disorder, the student: (1) lacks the capacity to respond to the allegations, (2) did not know the nature and the quality of the action in question or (3) had approved accommodations through the Office of Disability Services that were not implemented and failure to provide such accommodations resulted in the disciplinary violation.

Students on medical leave are not regarded as having permanently withdrawn from the College and need not apply for readmission through the Admissions Office. However, students must be approved for fitness to return to campus through the process described in the policies below. A student may request a more limited medically excused status if he or she is medically unable to complete the final forty percent of a semester but intends to return to the College at the beginning of the following semester. The request is initiated in the same manner as described below in the voluntary medical leave section. A student approved for medically excused status need not request permission to return to the College for the following semester unless conditions for returning had been stipulated by the College at the time of departure.

A student on medical leave (regardless of whether voluntary or required) will retain all accrued seniority for housing and registration purposes and may register conditionally for courses if he or she intends to return for the following semester. Any money paid to the College as deposits against tuition or charges anticipated for the following semester will be refunded in full if the student is not approved to return. Documentation for determination of fitness to return must be received by the deadlines listed below and approval to return granted in order for registration to be considered final. Seniority for housing preferences cannot be guaranteed for students who do not meet these requirements.

### **Financial aid implications**

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the Financial Aid Office individually to discuss the implications of medical leave on his or her financial aid.

### **Refund of tuition and fees**

Students who take medical leave during the first five weeks of the semester may be eligible for some refund. Please see the Student Financial Services website for specific information: [www.messiah.edu/info/21513/refunds](http://www.messiah.edu/info/21513/refunds)  
No refunds will be given for students who are granted medical leave during the final 10 weeks of the semester.

## VOLUNTARY MEDICAL LEAVE

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The following policy establishes the procedures under which a voluntary medical leave may occur, as well as the process for return from leave.

### **1. Initiation of Request**

A student requesting medical leave must make the request in writing to the Director of Counseling and Health Services. The request may be for either one or two semesters. The student may be required to provide appropriate documentation from a physician, therapist, or other qualified caregiver. All medical leave documents can be found at: [https://www.messiah.edu/info/20898/educators/1432/medical\\_leave](https://www.messiah.edu/info/20898/educators/1432/medical_leave)

### **2. Determination of request**

A decision approving or disapproving the medical leave request will be made by the Director of Counseling and Health

Services. If there is a pending academic or disciplinary proceeding that could result in a suspension from the College, medical leave requests will not be considered until the proceeding has concluded. A student under suspension from the College is ineligible for medical leave.

As part of receiving medical leave the student may be asked to arrange for ongoing treatment during the time he or she is on medical leave. Failure to comply with this treatment would result in a termination of the medical leave and mandatory withdrawal from school.

When a student has been approved for medical leave, the Director will provide a copy of the decision to the Registrar. The Registrar will notify appropriate offices on campus of the student's status and send a copy of the decision to the student for his or her records. Copies of the decision will be maintained in the student's academic and student life files. Original documentation from the student's medical records will be maintained confidentially by the Director of Counseling and Health Services.

A request for medical leave for the current semester must be made prior to the last week of class in the fall or spring semester, or prior to the last day of class in January term.

### **3. Effective date of medical leave status**

A student whose request for medical leave is approved during the first sixty percent of the semester will be deemed to have medical leave status as of the date on which his or her request was made to the Director of Counseling and Health Services. The student will remain on medical leave status for the balance of that semester and may request an extension for the next semester by filing a request as described below.

A student whose request for medical leave is approved during the final forty percent of the semester will be deemed to be a medically excused continuing student for the balance of that semester, but will have medical leave status as of the first day of the following semester. The student may request an extension for one additional semester by filing a request as described below.

### **4. Extension of medical leave status**

A student on medical leave status may request a one-semester extension by providing new documentation to the Director of Counseling and Health Services by August 1 for the fall semester or December 1 for the spring semester. A decision approving or disapproving the request will be made by the Director of Counseling and Health Services. The Director will provide a copy of the decision to the Registrar, who will notify appropriate offices on campus. Medical leave status may continue no longer than two consecutive semesters. After this time, a student who does not return to the College will be deemed officially withdrawn. Students who are approved for more than one medical leave during their time at Messiah College may be subject to different degree requirements than when they originally entered the College. Different degree requirements may extend the amount of time it takes for a student to complete his/her degree. Students returning from a second medical leave are encouraged to consult with the Registrar's Office about their degree requirements.

### **5. Grades and completion of medical leave work**

A student whose request for medical leave is approved during the first sixty percent of the semester will be given a grade of "W" (Withdrawal) in each course for which he or she is registered. No "I" (Incomplete) grades will be given. No credit will be earned for any course, and a prorated refund of charges will be made as determined by Student Financial Services. A student whose request for medical leave is approved during the final forty percent of the semester may be deemed medically excused and may be given a grade of "I" for one or more courses with the approval of the faculty member(s). When a grade of "I" is not deemed feasible, a grade of "W" will be given. No refund of charges will be made for courses in which a grade of "I" is given. To receive academic credit for a course, incomplete work must be completed by the final day of the semester following that during which medical leave was approved. It is the responsibility of the student to contact individual instructors to arrange for the timely completion of course work. If the student does not complete work in a course within this time, the grade of "I" for that course will be changed to a "W."

### **6. Determination of fitness to return to campus**

A student requesting to return from medical leave will be asked to sign a release allowing the Director of Counseling and Health Services to communicate with the physician, therapist, or other caregiver, as well as with other persons at Messiah College involved in determining the student's fitness to return. The student must provide documentation from his or her physician, therapist, or other caregiver concerning current medical status by August 1 to be considered for approval to return for the fall semester, or by December 1 to be considered for approval to return for the spring semester. The student also may be required to have an interview with the Director of Counseling and Health Services and/or the Director of Disability Services. The College reserves the right to require the student, in order to return to and remain in classes, to be in ongoing, off-campus treatment as well as other necessary stipulations. All information will be reviewed and a decision regarding fitness to return will be made by the Director of Counseling and Health Services, who will notify the Registrar. The granting of medical leave by the College does not guarantee that the student will be allowed to return.

The following policy establishes the procedures under which a required medical leave may occur, as well as the process for return from leave. Its requirements and procedures are applicable to all students with or without disabilities.

**1. Standards for a Required Leave**

Typically, a Required Medical Leave is invoked when a student exhibits acute or persistent health or behavioral problems which arise from physical or mental health issues. Each situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The College may initiate the Required Medical Leave process if, in the judgment of the Dean of Students, a student meets one or more of the following criteria:

- a. The student is deemed a direct threat to the safety, health, or well-being of any person. A direct threat to others includes any danger of suicide, self-mutilation, accident, or assault that cannot be mitigated by reasonable accommodations or necessitates unusual measures to monitor, supervise, treat, protect, or restrain the student to ensure his or her safety and the safety of those around the student.
- b. The student's behavior is disruptive to others and negatively affects the community. Disruptive behavior is that which causes emotional, psychological or physical distress to fellow students or staff substantially above that normally experienced in daily life. Such disruption may be in the form of severe distress associated with one or more behavioral incidents, or somewhat less severe but persistent distress over a more extended period.
- c. The student refuses to cooperate with recommended assessment or treatment and his or her physical or psychological disorder seems likely to deteriorate to the point of permanent disability, disfigurement, impairment or dysfunction without such assessment or treatment, thus presenting a direct threat to the safety, health, or well-being a person. Where standard assessment is impossible because of the student's resistance, indirect behavioral observations will constitute the basis for judgment.

**2. Procedures for a Required Medical Leave**

When conditions allow for an investigation, including an individual assessment of the student's health status, resolution of the situation will first be sought with the student's cooperation if at all possible. Voluntary leave is encouraged to preserve, to the extent possible, confidentiality, and to maximize the participation of the student or his or her family. If the student declines voluntary medical leave, he or she may be involuntarily withdrawn from the College. The involuntary medical leave process can be initiated by any College official who believes a student meets one or more of the standards described in paragraphs 1a, 1b, or 1c above. College officials with concerns about student safety will contact the Dean of Students, who will coordinate the Required Medical Leave process.

When the Dean of Students becomes aware of a student who may fit the standards for required medical leave, she will request an individualized physical or mental health assessment from the Director of Counseling and Health Services and a community impact review from the Associate Dean of Students. When possible, this should begin with a one-on-one meeting with the identified student. The individualized health assessment will include relevant records from on- and off-campus treatment providers. The community impact review will include relevant information from employees and students having interaction with the student. If the Dean of Students deems the student does not meet any of the standards for a Required Medical Leave, this process will terminate and the Associate Dean of Students, Director of Counseling and Health Services, and/or the Director of Disability Services will meet with the student to develop reasonable accommodations necessary for student success and community safety. The student will be required to adhere to the established accommodations. Failure to adhere to the established parameters could result in the student being required to take a medical leave.

If the individualized health assessment and community impact review result in a recommended medical leave, and the student refuses voluntary medical leave, then a Health Review Team will be established. The Health Review Team will be comprised of the Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Students, and the Director of Disability Services.

The Health Review Team will review the individualized health assessment and the community impact review and will invite the student to meet with the team. At that time, the student may provide additional information for consideration. The Team may require a further assessment of the student by a medical/psychiatric provider identified by the Team to determine if the student meets the standards above.

The work of the Team will be guided by the following:

- Each student's situation is different, and an individualized determination must be conducted in each case, considering the stressors faced by that student.
- The *nature, duration, and severity* of risk to self or the community must be considered.
- A consideration will be made of *reasonable accommodations* which may mitigate risk and contribute to student success and community safety
- Emphasis must be placed on the student's *observed conduct, actions, and statements*, as opposed to primarily on speculation, inferences and assumptions.

If the Team concludes that the student does not meet any of the standards for a Required Medical Leave, it will inform the student in writing and establish reasonable accommodations for student success and community safety.

If the Team concludes that the student does meet one or more of the standards for a Required Medical Leave, the Team will notify the student of its decision in writing and will include its reasons for this conclusion, the effective date of the medical leave, the conditions for return (if applicable), and the appeal process to be followed by the student. The Team's decision will become effective immediately upon deposit in the mail or hand delivery.

### **3. Interim Measures**

In all cases where a Required Medical Leave is being considered, the College will undertake an appropriate review and take prompt and effective action to support and protect the student(s) involved. This includes taking appropriate interim measures before the final decision is made. If the Dean of Students has reason to believe, based on information available, and in consultation with professionals with appropriate expertise, that the student's continued presence on campus poses an imminent threat of significant harm to self or others in the community, the College may take immediate action to remove the student from campus pending receipt and review of relevant information. This temporary removal may remain in place pending completion of any appeal process. Accordingly, the College may impose a "no contact" directive, which will typically include a directive that the involved parties refrain from having written, verbal, phone/text, or physical contact with one another, directly or through a third party, pending an individualized health assessment and community impact review and final decision. The College may also take any further protective action that it deems appropriate concerning the student pending the Health Review and final decision, including, without limitation, directing the appropriate College officials to alter the student's class schedule, housing (including restriction from College housing), and/or access to the campus (including class attendance).

### **4. Access to Campus During Leave**

In certain circumstances, the student on medical leave may have their access to campus and other students limited during the time they are on leave. If these stipulations are established, they will be communicated in writing. Upholding or not upholding these parameters will have a measure of influence the recommendation for a return.

### **5. Student Appeal Process for a Required Medical Leave**

The Health Review Team's decision may be appealed by the student to the Vice President for Human Resources and Compliance within five (5) business days of the decision. Such appeals should be in writing and include specific points the student wishes the Vice President for Human Resources and Compliance to consider. The Vice President for Human Resources and Compliance will make a decision based on the record. Additional evidence may be submitted, but it does not need to be considered.

The Vice President for Human Resources and Compliance has seven (7) business days to review the record and inform the student of his or her decision in writing. The Vice President for Human Resources and Compliance may (a) uphold the decision of the Team, (b) refer the matter back to the Team for further proceedings, or (c) reverse the decision of the Team and reinstate the student. The Vice President for Human Resources and Compliance's decision is final.

### **6. Process for Return to the College after a Required Medical Leave**

Permission to return for a student who has been placed on a Required Medical Leave will follow the guidelines for returning from voluntary medical leave, with the approval of the Associate Dean of Students and Director of Counseling and Health Services. Typically, at a minimum, conditions for return to class may include medical or psychiatric treatment during the period of leave and verification of compliance with recommendations of treatment providers. Other conditions for return may include examinations by independent or College-employed medical health professionals, release of relevant medical records, demonstrated ability to meet the College's academic and conduct standards, interviews with College officials, personal statements, and a decrease in the conduct resulting in the

Required Medical Leave. The amount and nature of material requested, and the breadth of the review, will be based upon the nature and severity of the student's condition at the time Required Medical Leave was taken. Approval to return will be granted only if the Associate Dean of Students and Director of Counseling and Health Services determine that the conditions that led to the Required Medical Leave are no longer present or are mitigated to the extent that the student does not meet one or more of the standards in Paragraphs 1a, 1b, or 1c above.

The Associate Dean of Students and Director of Counseling and Health Services will consider recommendations of the student's care providers regarding return, but will make determinations independently and in accordance with all available information and expertise. Thus, a recommendation for return from a student's healthcare provider(s) is not in itself sufficient grounds for return. Failure of the student to cooperate in these procedures, to comply with required conditions of the leave or withdrawal, or to provide accurate and complete information is grounds for reconsideration of the student's status. Once all the relevant information has been considered, the Associate Dean of Students and Director of Counseling and Health Services will make a recommendation to the Dean of Students, who makes a final determination regarding the student's return from Required Medical Leave. Approval to return may include stipulations concerning class schedule, extracurricular activities, place of residence or other conditions as may be judged to be appropriate to the safety, health, and well-being of all persons in the campus community.

#### **7. Confidentiality**

If the student has been treated at the Engle Center, treatment records may be used in determining the outcome of the Required Medical Leave process. Under such extreme conditions that a consideration for Required Medical Leave is necessary, the Director of Counseling and Health Services may decide that confidentiality must be waived, as is indicated in the "Client Consent" form signed by the student at the initiation of counseling. All records concerning Required Medical Leave will be kept in accordance with College policy. Required Medical Leave will be recorded on the transcript as a withdrawal from current courses.