YOU’RE IMPORTANT TO US!

The University of Michigan
Plant Operations Division
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Having an illness or injury that results in your being temporarily unable to work is never pleasant and can be a frustrating and difficult time. When you are unable to work in your regular job, YOU will likely be concerned about a number of things. Many people express fears related to loss of income, quality of medical treatment and returning to work. If the disability is the result of an accident at work, there is added concern about preventing this from happening again to you or a co-worker. OUR concerns are the same as yours.

Because we believe that work is an important part of the recovery process, we will do our best to bring you back to work as soon as possible.

This brochure is meant to provide you with an understanding of the return-to-work process and provide you with information about where to go for answers about medical treatment and returning to work. As a productive activity employer, we want you to know that we care about your problems and want to help you recover and return to work as quickly as possible.

WHO HANDLES MY REQUEST FOR SICK TIME AND/OR OTHER BENEFITS?
The staff in the Risk Management Department will be responsible for evaluating any request for sick time in excess of seven days or in cases where there are recurring health problems. Risk Management will also evaluate any requests for benefits under Workers’ Compensation. We value your contributions to your department and know how important they are in providing quality service to our customers. For this reason, Risk Management’s staff will work very closely with your department and medical provider to achieve the goal of identifying productive activities that will contribute to your recovery process.

While our goal is to identify productive activities, there may be times when that is not possible. Your doctor may advise that your condition requires certain physical restrictions on your activities for a period of time. We will always attempt to find work to accommodate your restrictions, but that may not always be possible. If accommodated work cannot be identified, Risk Management will authorize payment of appropriate disability payments that will be issued on your regular paycheck.
**Disability/Sick Time Benefits.** Sick time benefits will be approved by Risk Management equal to the amount of your regular salary as long as sufficient hours have accrued in your sick time bank. Because each job family has specific accrual schedules, the staff in the Risk Management Department will be able to explain your available benefits.

**Workers’ Compensation.** Workers’ Compensation benefits will be authorized for covered claims at a rate determined by the State of Michigan. This rate is based on your average weekly wage, income tax filing status and number of dependents and is equal to approximately 80 percent of your after-tax income. Depending on your job family, this amount may be coordinated with any sick time benefits paid to you; in other situations this amount can be supplemented by available sick time. Your Service Coordinator in the Risk Management Department will be able to explain your available benefits.

**WHAT IF I CAN ONLY RETURN TO LIGHT DUTY?**
Immediately contact your Service Coordinator in the Risk Management Department who will assist you by helping to identify **productive activities** you are able to perform within your restrictions. Risk Management staff will work with you, your department, your Case Manager and your physician to find work that meets the doctor’s specifications. Our goal is to get you back to work, right away, so that your wage loss is minimal.

**WHAT IF THE LIGHT DUTY WORK PAYS LESS THAN MY USUAL SALARY?**
Sick Time pay was designed as a “safety net” so you can get along financially during your recovery. It has never been intended to be a substitute for your earnings. We are committed to finding **productive activity** for you as soon as possible that will promote recovery and minimize the financial impact your disability will have on your life. If you choose not to work in a light duty job, you will not be entitled to any temporary disability payments. Depending on your job family and the Workers’ Compensation claim status, you may be able to supplement your temporary salary with disability pay when working in a light duty assignment.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Yours**

**Regular Communications is Required.** Your Risk Management Service Coordinator will speak with you as often as necessary regarding medical appointments, concerns about your doctor, changes in your medical condition, and to discuss your return-to-work options. You should plan on speaking with your direct supervisor on a weekly basis during the first 30 days of disability.

In addition to routine calls, you are expected to return any calls placed to you within 24 hours. Frequent communication is necessary to ensure that we can get you back to work as soon as possible, within the doctor’s restrictions.
There may be times with further information is needed to evaluate a request for temporary disability or Worker’s Compensation benefits. This does not happen often, but your cooperation will help to complete any evaluation as quickly as possible. The sooner the evaluation is completed, the sooner a decision about disability payments can be expected and return-to-work options can be discussed.

See your doctor as scheduled. You should feel comfortable asking questions about your medical condition and recovery. Don’t be afraid to tell the doctor if there is something you don’t understand and ask about what you should expect during the recovery process. Sometimes it’s a good idea to prepare your questions in advance so you won’t forget to ask something important.

Follow your doctor’s instructions. Ask the doctor what you can do to speed your recovery and take medications, rest and exercise as directed. Live within the restrictions imposed while you are at home and at work. Failure to comply with restrictions can jeopardize your benefits and employment. Most importantly, not following the doctor’s instructions can cause you to become more disabled and seriously aggravate your condition.

**YOUR CASE MANAGER**

*Coordinate medical treatment.* A nurse Case Manager will be assigned to help you when your condition means that you will not be able to work your regular job for more than two weeks. This person will be available to answer any questions about your medical condition, your doctor’s instructions, diagnostic tests, and any other concerns you may have. The Case Manager will be in regular contact with your physician, your department and the Risk Management Department to discuss your recovery status and return-to-work options.

**YOUR DOCTOR**

*Provide quality medical treatment.* Your doctor’s most important job is to determine what’s wrong and what the best course of treatment will be for you to recover. While it’s not usually necessary, the doctor will refer you for specialty care when appropriate. Sometimes a specialist is needed because your condition is unusual or severe; other times a specialist is consulted if the treatment you are receiving isn’t improving your condition.

*Identifying physical restrictions.* The doctor will identify the physical restrictions resulting from your condition. Only a physician can identify what activities you are able to perform while you are recovering so that you can heal and avoid further injury. The Risk Management Department and Case Manager will work with your department to identify what **productive activities** are available for you to perform within these restrictions.
**RISK MANAGEMENT**

Your Service Coordinator’s primary responsibilities are:

- To find *productive activities* for you to perform within your physical abilities so you can come back to work and earn your full pay.

- To serve as a resource when you need information and aren’t sure where to go for help.

- To coordinate communication between departments and provide documentation when needed.

- To make sure that your disability benefits are processed appropriately.

- To coordinate the assistance of additional resources when appropriate.

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**WE KNOW THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF OUR ABILITY TO SERVE OUR CUSTOMERS IS YOU. WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO YOU WHEN YOU NEED IT AND TO HELPING COORDINATE THE RETURN-TO-WORK PROCESS.**