

POLICY & PROCEDURE	
	Sick Leave & Return To Work
Approved: 	Supersedes: March 1, 2005 Approved: June 1, 2006 <div style="text-align: right;">Page 1 of 2</div>

Statistics show that employees who have suffered an injury or illness recover more quickly if they return to their daily routines as soon as feasible. The City of Duluth values the strength and efficiency brought to the organization by its experienced workforce and strives to return employee to work in a manner that facilitates their recovery. Employees in this situation may need some work modification to enable them to return to work and work efficiently. Please note that employees involved in a workers' compensation or disability claim must follow the "[On the Job Injuries/Illness](#)" policy/procedure. The following procedure must be used for reporting and monitoring sick leave, as well as aiding employees who need short-term modifications in their job duties to be able to perform their jobs during a recovery period.

Reporting Sick Leave

- 1) Employees must report directly to their supervisor, indicating the nature and seriousness of the illness/injury and the anticipated date of return. If the supervisor is unavailable, the employee must leave a message with a return phone number so their supervisor may reach them.
- 2) Employees must personally report their absences on a daily basis unless the duration of the absence is known at the time of the initial contact or they are medically unable to do so. Supervisors will advise how to report in cases of extended absences.
- 3) Employees must provide information to their supervisors to assess the ability to work and to develop a plan for work completion or returning the employee to work.

Tracking and Evaluating Sick Leave

- 1) Supervisors must track and evaluate absences to determine reasons for sick leave usage and detect if any patterns are emerging.
- 2) Supervisors must require the employee to provide a "[Physician's Report/Employee Work Status](#)" form from their physician under the following circumstances:
 - a) The absence is longer than three days – supervisor must discuss with Employee Benefits Specialist (EBS) whether the absence qualifies as family leave and notify employee through the "[Sick Leave Request](#)" memo.
 - b) The use of sick leave appears unjustified – supervisor must notify employee through the "[Letter of Concern](#)".
 - c) The supervisor believes it is necessary to determine the employee's medical fitness to perform job tasks or to attend work – supervisor and EBS determine necessity and schedule the fitness-for-duty exam. Supervisor advises employee of the scheduled exam and provides them with the "[Fitness for Duty Appointment Notification](#)".
- 3) Physician's documentation must be immediately forwarded to the EBS.
- 4) When absences appear to be unjustified (see below for examples), the supervisor must meet with the employee to discuss attendance expectations and concerns. Together, the supervisor and employee can develop steps to remedy or control the absences. If warranted, the supervisor may refer the employee to the Employee Assistance Program.
- 5) Supervisors must conduct follow-up meetings to counsel the employee as necessary and continue to monitor the attendance until sick leave usage has been reduced to acceptable levels.

Examples of Sick Leave Abuse

1. Pattern sick days - usage associated with holidays, weekends, vacation, same day of the week, etc.
2. Monthly random use
3. Calling in sick when scheduled to work on a "special" day such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

POLICY & PROCEDURE	
	Sick Leave & Return To Work
Approved: 	Supersedes: March 1, 2005 Approved: June 1, 2006 <div style="text-align: right;">Page 2 of 2</div>

4. Frequent new and unrelated ailments
5. Alternating between use of sick leave and vacation
6. Using sick leave and/or other paid leave as rapidly as it is accumulated

Possible Causes Not Related to Illness or Injury

Work-Related

Boredom
Low morale
Job dissatisfaction
High-pressure stress
Poor working environment
Poor ratio of staff to workload
Lack of work group cohesiveness
Poor supervision / inadequate leadership

Non-Work Related

Inadequate nutrition
Poor physical fitness
Personal value systems
Poor self-motivation
Monday / Friday syndrome
Personal problems - financial, marital, etc.

Modifying Work for Recovering Employees

- 1) Employee or supervisor provides written request to the EBS detailing short-term (six months or less) modification needs.
- 2) EBS reviews work restrictions and the job description. A fitness for duty examination may be required.
- 3) EBS meets with the employee and supervisor to determine what modifications, if any, will enable the employee to return to work, with documentation of such on the "[Notice of Job Assignment and Performance Requirements](#)" form.
 - a) If medical opinion indicates that the employee is able to work with workplace accommodation(s), the employee is not entitled to sick leave. The employee has the option of accepting light duty or taking family leave up to the 12-week entitlement (including the substitution of other paid leave).
 - b) If employee is not entitled to sick leave, (s)he must complete the department's paid leave request form and/or a "[Request for Unpaid Family Leave](#)", as applicable.
- 4) Employee's supervisor will monitor work performance and if inadequate, determine the reason. If related to injury or illness, further modification may be required, to include seeking a change of assignment
- 5) An employee who has not recovered sufficiently to perform the essential functions of his/her job in the six months following the return to work, will be offered Long Term Disability benefits in accordance with the governing collective bargaining agreement.

Note: If there are already modifications in place to prevent injury or to assist employees to do their job, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that employees are using them. Failure to use or enforce modifications will result in disciplinary action. The City's goal is to stop preventable injuries from occurring.