# Medical Leave and Return Process Summary

Office of Student Support & Accountability – Michigan State University

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## Overview

Spartans thrive when every member of our community can achieve their health and wellness goals alongside academic and co-curricular requirements. The [Medical Leave and Return Process](https://ossa.msu.edu/medical-leave) is an exceptional remedy to assist students experiencing medical issues who must take time away from academic enrollment. A Medical Leaveincludes a complete withdrawal from a term of enrollment and offers students time and space to prioritize their health and wellness in an individualized timeframe.

The University Withdrawal Policy empowers the Medical Leave and Return Process, which applies to student requests for complete withdrawal from a term due to medical reasons for self that have had a catastrophic impact on the student’s ability to remain enrolled. The Medical Leave and Return Process applies to undergraduate, graduate, and graduate-professional students, with the exception of students in the College of Human Medicine, College of Osteopathic Medicine, and College of Law, who may seek leave information and options directly from their College’s student affairs/services office.

* Students must be currently enrolled in courses in order to request a Medical Leave from the current term (i.e. a student pursuing a Medical Leave for the current term must not drop their classes before their request for Medical Leave has been reviewed/processed).
* Students must have completed the requested term (with grades posted) in order to request a Medical Leave for a previously completed term.
* The Office of Student Support & Accountability only considers requests for Return from Medical Leave for students who have been approved for Medical Leave/Medical Withdrawal from either the Office of Student Support & Accountability or the Medical Withdrawal Committee (a previous university procedure).
* All withdrawals (including Medical Leaves/Medical Withdrawals) from the University are subject to the [Refund Policy: Refund of Course Fees and Tuition](https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=443).
* A student may receive a Medical Leave (including Medical Leaves for previously completed terms) for a maximum of 2 terms during enrollment in an educational program.
  + Students who have already received two Medical Leaves in an educational program may petition the Director of the Office of Student Support & Accountability or designee for additional requests for Medical Leaves, who may confer with the University Physician or designee and University ADA Coordinator or designee in making determinations to equitably consider additional requests.
  + Only the term that is withdrawn as a result of a medical leave counts toward the 2 term limit. For example, if a student withdraws via a medical leave during Fall 2022 and remains unenrolled at MSU until Fall 2023, they have only taken 1 medical leave (Fall 2022). In this example, Spring 2023 and Summer 2023 would not count toward the total.
* All Office of Student Support & Accountability staff members are mandatory reporters of relationship violence, sexual misconduct, discrimination, and crimes. According to Federal and State law, and University guidelines and policies: any information shared in the Medical Leave and Return Process may be reported to one of the following offices: Counseling and Psychiatric Services, Office of the University Physician, MSU Police and/or the Office of Institutional Equity.
* The Office of Student Support & Accountability reserves the right to make adjustments to process structure and guidelines for good cause. Such petitions must be made to the Director of the Office of Student Support & Accountability or designee.

## Other Supportive Options

#### Office for Civil Rights

For support and accommodations or to seek a withdrawal from the University related to pregnancy or parenting, students may contact the [Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)](https://oie.msu.edu/), within the [Office for Civil Rights (OCR)](https://civilrights.msu.edu/index.html).

For support and accommodations or to seek a withdrawal from the University related to relationship violence or sexual misconduct (RVSM), students may contact the Supportive Measures and Equity Coordinator in [Office of Support and Equity](https://civilrights.msu.edu/support/index.html), within the Office for Civil Rights. Contacting OIE or OCR may require the creation of a mandatory report for University Title IX requirements. The Supportive Measures and Equity Coordinator can discuss general options with a student who is unsure about disclosing details of a RVSM experience.

#### College or Neighborhood Student Success Collaborative

For all other non-medical withdrawal requests or individual course drop requests, students should contact the Assistant/Associate Dean or designee of their [College](https://msu.edu/academics/colleges.php), or for exploratory preference students, the [Neighborhood Student Success Collaborative (NSSC)](https://nssc.msu.edu/).

#### Office of the University Ombudsperson

The [Office of the University Ombudsperson](https://ombud.msu.edu/) is available to all students as a confidential resource to discuss academic and nonacademic concerns and to interpret and explain university policies and procedures.

#### Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities

The [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD)](https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/) is available to all students and employees of MSU who have a disability that substantially limits a major life activity. Students and employees can register with the RCPD and may be eligible to receive accommodations.

## Process Structure and Guidelines

Students initiate requests for Medical Leave and Return from Medical Leave through the [Office of Student Support & Accountability](https://www.ossa.msu.edu/), whose staff administers the Medical Leave and Return Process and provides referrals to informational and support resources.

### Requests for Medical Leave

#### Timelines

1. Requests for Medical Leave for the current term may be made until the last day of class within the term.
2. Requests for Medical Leave for previously completed terms may be made up to one year after the requested term concludes (e.g., a Request for Medical Leave for Fall 2023 must be made by the last day of class during the Fall 2024 term in order to be reviewed.)
   1. If a student is currently enrolled and requests a Medical Leave for a previously completed term, and if the outcome is supported with readiness to return required, the student will be dropped from their current and future enrollment until their request for Return from Medical Leave is supported.
      1. In this situation, the student will be given an opportunity to accept or decline the medical leave prior to processing the withdrawal and thus, current enrollment being dropped.
      2. Additionally, if the student is currently living on-campus, Residence Education and Housing Services will be notified in order to initiate the move out process.

#### Before requesting a Medical Leave

1. Students must understand how the process will impact them.
   1. General Process Understanding
      1. All students are expected to review this document, the Medical Leave and Return Process Summary, available on the Office of Student Support & Accountability website, before submitting a Student Request Form.
   2. Financial Impacts
      1. Students who receive financial aid are expected to contact the Office of Financial Aid to determine the financial impact of taking a medical leave (medical withdrawal) prior to submitting a Student Request Form.
   3. Academic Impacts
      1. Undergraduate students are expected to have connected with the [Assistant/Associate Dean or designee of their College or University Advising](https://ossa.msu.edu/mlrp-college-contacts) (exploratory preference students) about the Medical Leave and Return Process and any individual academic or personal implications before submitting a Student Request Form.
      2. Graduate and graduate-professional students are expected to have connected with their Department Advisor/Chair, Program Director, or designee about the Medical Leave and Return Process and any individual academic, personal, and/or financial implications it may cause prior to submitting a Student Request Form.
   4. Visa and Immigration Impacts
      1. International students are expected to have connected with the Office for International Students and Scholars to discuss individual Visa implications before submitting a Student Request Form.
2. Students must complete Part 1 of the *Treatment Provider Report Form* and have their Licensed Treatment Provider complete Part 2.
   1. The *Treatment Provider Report Form* is required when requesting a Medical Leave.
   2. A blank PDF of the *Treatment Provider Report Form* is available on theOSSA website.

#### Requesting a Medical Leave

1. If a student indicates they have questions about the Medical Leave and Return Process, the student is expected to contact the [OSSA team](https://ossa.msu.edu/contact) to discuss those questions prior to initiating a request.
2. When a student is ready to formally request a Medical Leave, they will complete a [Student Request Form](https://ossa.msu.edu/make-request) online. As required on the Student Request Form, the student must attach their Treatment Provider Report Form, completed by the student (Part 1) and the student’s licensed treatment provider (Part 2).
3. Upon receipt of the Student Request Form (“Medical Leave for the Current Term” or “Medical Leave for a Previously Completed Term), the Office of Student Support & Accountability will notify the student that their SRF has been received and copy the following MSU staff.
   1. The student’s College student affairs/advising leadership or University Advising, if exploratory preference.
   2. [Student-Athlete Support Services](https://www.sass.msu.edu/), if the student is a student-athlete.
   3. [Office for International Students and Scholars](https://oiss.isp.msu.edu/), if the student is an international student.
      1. International students with F-1 and J-1 visas are strongly advised to discuss their request for Medical Leave with the Office for International Students and Scholars to learn about individual immigration and Visa status implications.

#### Medical Leave Review Process

1. Requests for Medical Leave will be reviewed as they are received and students may expect to learn the outcome of their request via their MSU email within ten business days, on which the student’s College student affairs/services leadership or University Advising will be copied. Additionally, the Office for International Students and Scholars will be copied on Medical Leave outcomes for international students.
   1. Requests for Medical Leave may be reviewed in consultation with the University Physician or designee and/or the University ADA Coordinator or designee.
   2. If a Request for Medical Leave is missing required information, the student will be notified via their MSU email and given five business days to correct the issue(s). If the issue(s) is not corrected, the request may be closed. If a request is closed, the student may resubmit their request again, per process guidelines and timelines.
2. Requests for Medical Leave that have been reviewed may result in three outcomes:
   1. **Supported with readiness to return required:** the student’s request for Medical Leave is supported and information does not support that the student is currently ready to reenroll.
      1. When readiness to return is required, students must complete the Return from Medical Leave process and receive an outcome of “supported” in order to reenroll at MSU.
         1. Before pursuing a Medical Leave, students are expected to evaluate and understand the Return from Medical Leave review deadlines, which occur four times per year, generally before the start of each term.
         2. If a student receives a “supported with readiness to return required” outcome, depending upon the timing of the outcome, there exists a high probability that a student would not be able to meet the review deadline for Return from Medical Leave for the subsequent term. Thus, the student would take the subsequent term off from enrollment at MSU.
   2. **Supported without readiness to return required:** the student’s request for Medical Leave is supported and information supports that the student is currently ready to reenroll. No additional action is required within the Medical Leave and Return Process for the student to reenroll when they so choose.
   3. **Not Supported:** the student’s request for Medical Leave is not supported.
      1. If a request is not supported, the Office of Student Support & Accountability will provide an explanation for the outcome and an opportunity for the student to initiate a new request for the term originally requested, per process guidelines.
      2. To place their request again, the student must submit a new Student Request Form.
3. Factors utilized in the Medical Leave review process include:
   1. The treatment provider’s report (e.g., dates of treatment, number of appointments/sessions attended, etc.)
   2. The treatment provider’s assessment of whether or not the student’s medical condition affected their academic progress, functioning, and/or ability;
   3. Specific impairments noted by the treatment provider that impacted progress, functioning, and/or ability;
   4. The treatment provider’s assessment of whether or not the student’s medical condition had a catastrophic impact on the student’s ability to remain enrolled and associated time frame of condition;
   5. The treatment provider’s assessment of whether the student’s medical condition is: predictably time-limited and highly likely to resolve, likely to be managed successfully on its own without additional treatment, and provider’s sufficiently documented progress with the condition, and associated rationale;
4. When a student’s Request for Medical Leave is supported (with or without readiness to return required), the Office of Student Support & Accountability will request a complete withdrawal for the requested term through the Office of the Registrar. Depending upon the last date of attendance, no grades may be reported or “W” grades may be reported for all courses, regardless of any original grade(s) assigned.
   1. If a student’s request is supported with readiness to return required, the Office of Student Support & Accountability will place an appearance hold or service indicator on the student’s account to prevent future enrollment.
   2. If a student’s request is supported with readiness to return required and the student has planned future enrollment, the Office of Student Support & Accountability will request that the student’s future enrollment be removed.
   3. If a student’s request is supported without readiness to return required and the student has planned future enrollment, future courses will remain in place and no holds or service indicators will be placed by the Office of Student Support & Accountability.
   4. If the student is currently living on-campus and the Medical Leave is for the current term, Residence Education and Housing Services will be notified in order to initiate the move out process.

### Requests for Return from Medical Leave

#### Before Requesting to Return from Medical Leave

1. Students must complete Part 1 of the *Assessment and Recommendation for Return from Medical Leave* (form) and have their Licensed Treatment Provider complete Part 2.
   1. The *Assessment and Recommendation for Return from Medical Leave* is required when requesting a Medical Leave.
   2. A blank PDF of the Assessment and Recommendation for Return from Medical Leave is available on the OSSA website.

#### Requesting a Return from Medical Leave

1. When a student is ready to formally request to Return from Medical Leave, they will complete a [Student Request Form](https://ossa.msu.edu/make-request) online. As required on the Student Request Form, the student must attach their Assessment and Recommendation to Return from Medical Leave (form) that must be completed by the student (Part 1) and student’s licensed treatment provider (Part 2).
2. Upon receipt of the Student Request Form (“Return from Medical Leave”), the Office of Student Support & Accountability will notify the student that their SRF has been received and copy the following MSU staff.

#### Return from Medical Leave Review Process

1. Requests for Return from Medical Leave are reviewed four times per year, prior to the start of each term.
2. Students may expect to learn the outcome of their request via their MSU email within ten business days of the review deadline by which their completed request was received, on which the student’s College student affairs/advising leadership or University Advising, if exploratory preference, will be copied. Additionally, the Office for International Students and Scholars will be copied on Return from Medical Leave outcomes for international students.
   1. Review deadlines for requests for Return from Medical Leave (based on the term the student intends to reenroll):
      1. March 1 (Summer term intended start)
      2. May 15 (Fall term intended start, interested in on-campus housing)
         1. Note: On-campus housing is not guaranteed, but an earlier review may increase the likelihood of receiving an on-campus room assignment.
      3. July 15 (Fall term intended start, not interested in on-campus housing)
      4. November 1 (Spring term intended start)
   2. Requests for Return from Medical Leave are due at 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time) on the review deadlines.
   3. A student may submit a request for Return from Medical Leave for an earlier review than the deadline that corresponds with their desired reenrollment term (e.g. a student who intends to return in the Fall term may ensure their complete request for Return from Medical Leave is received by the Office of Student Support & Accountability before March 1 to prompt an earlier review.)
   4. Requests for Return from Medical Leave may be reviewed in consultation with the University Physician or designee and/or the University ADA Coordinator or designee.
   5. Incomplete requests will not be reviewed.
3. Return from Medical Leave requests that have been reviewed may result in two outcomes:
   1. **Supported:** the student’s request for Return from Medical Leave is supported because information supports that the student is currently ready to reenroll.
   2. **Not Supported:** the student’s request for Return from Medical Leave is not supported because information does not support that the student is currently ready to reenroll. If a request is not supported, the Office of Student Support & Accountability will provide an explanation for the outcome and an opportunity for the student to resubmit their request for consideration at the next review, per process guidelines.
4. Factors utilized in the Return from Medical Leave review process include:
   1. The treatment provider’s report (e.g. length of treatment, number of appointments/sessions attended, etc.)
   2. The treatment provider’s report on observed changes in the student’s functioning during time in treatment;
   3. The treatment provider’s assessment of whether or not the student is ready to resume academic enrollment and associated rationale;
   4. The student’s responses to reflection-based questions on the Return from Medical Leave online request form.
5. When a Return from Medical Leave request is supported, the hold or service indicator on the student’s account related to the Medical Leave will be removed and the student will receive an individualized recommendation of support resources.
   1. It is expected that students returning from Medical Leave will meet with their academic unit (College/Department/Major) advisor to plan a successful return to studies.
   2. If a student has been away from MSU for more than three consecutive semesters, they must apply for readmission prior to reenrolling.

## Definitions

**Catastrophic impact:** A substantial effect on the ability to safely or successfully meet expectations of academic enrollment in a university setting, due to a physical or mental health condition. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

* Anxiety disorder causing poor appetite, poor motivation, and significant interference with studies;
* Bipolar disorder causing impaired concentration, social withdrawal, and inability to care for self or attend to daily routines;
* Chronic and debilitating migraines reducing productivity and ability to concentrate, study, or attend class;
* Crohn’s disease requiring surgery and inability to attend classes;
* Depression causing marked decrease in energy and concentration making it difficult to attend class;
* Eating disorder requiring future intensive outpatient treatments;
* Narcolepsy causing inability to sleep, focus, or concentrate and impacting attendance and studies;
* Substance abuse resulting in in-patient hospitalization and inability to complete the term;
* Uncontrolled systemic lupus causing debilitating pain and impacting sleep and concentration, making it difficult to attend classes and study.

**Licensed Treatment Provider:** An individual who possesses valid, active credentials from a licensing body to practice medicine or provide treatment to humans. Examples include but are not limited to the following: licensed nurse practitioner, licensed psychologist, licensed medical doctor, or licensed clinical social worker.

**Medical Leave:** A complete withdrawal from enrollment in a term as a result of a medical condition causing a catastrophic impact on a student’s ability to remain enrolled. It may also be referred to as a Medical Withdrawal.

## Complaints

Students who believe they have been discriminated against based upon their disability or other protected category may file a claim with the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE): [www.oie.msu.edu](http://www.oie.msu.edu) or (517) 353-3922. Students may also consult with the University Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator: [www.civilrights.msu.edu](http://www.civilrights.msu.edu) or (517) 355-3960.