

# VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY AND MEDICAL CENTER

## HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### SUBJECT: RETURN TO WORK PROGRAM

Policy # HR-010

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 1999

Revised July 1, 2006

## POLICY

Vanderbilt University and the Vanderbilt University Medical Center recognize returning staff members to work following a compensable employment-related injury or illness benefits both the staff member and the employer. Therefore, Vanderbilt has developed a Return to Work Program to assist staff members who are temporarily unable to return to regular duties as a result of an employment-related injury or illness.

## PROCEDURE

### A. Definition:

1. The **Vanderbilt Occupational Health Clinic (VOHC)** is responsible for administering the Return to Work Program in consultation with the Office of Insurance and Risk Management, Employee Relations, and the Opportunity Development Center.
2. A staff member's **home department** is the department to which his/her regular pre-injury/illness position is assigned.
3. A return to work (**RTW**) position is a temporary position to which a staff member is assigned when s/he is unable to return to his/her regular position following an employment related injury or illness.

### B. Eligibility

1. To be eligible for participation in the Return to Work Program, a staff member must be temporarily unable to return to his/her regular duties as a result of an employment related injury or illness.
2. A staff member must be in a regular or term position. Staff in a temporary, VTS and PRN positions are not eligible to participate in the Return to Work program. In addition, staff in grant funded positions may be excluded from the RTW program depending on the terms of the grant.
3. A staff member must be in good standing in his/her current position (not on Performance Improvement Counseling (PIC)).

4. A staff member who meets the eligibility requirements for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) may elect to use FMLA leave rather than participate in the Return to Work program. However, such an election may result in a discontinuance of workers' compensation temporary disability benefits.

C. **Process**

1. Once notified of an on-the-job injury or illness, the VOHC will determine from the healthcare provider if the staff member can return to work with or without restrictions.
2. A Return to Work Form will be used by the healthcare provider to indicate and outline specific restrictions and the duration of those restrictions.
3. The parameters of the Return to Work program and the expectation will be given to the staff member by a representative of the VOHC.
4. If the healthcare provider determines that the staff member can return to work with restrictions, then the VOHC will contact the staff member's home department to seek placement.
  - a. Efforts will be made to place a staff member in his/her home department either by temporarily modifying his/her current position or by creating a (RTW) position.
    - 1) VOHC/HR will provide department managers with general criteria to use in identifying positions which could be used to achieve temporary placement of staff with work restrictions.
    - 2) Department managers will also receive assistance from the VOHC/HR in drafting job descriptions for RTW positions.
5. While a staff member is participating in the Return to Work Program s/he is expected to meet the performance needs of the organization. Issues of poor performance or misconduct that arise during his/her period of participation in the Return to Work Program will be addressed through a process of performance improvement counseling as outlined in the Staff Handbook. **Prior to initiating these steps, the participating department should contact Employee Relations.**

D. **Compensation**

The staff member placed in a RTW position will be paid a salary equivalent to staff holding the same position, given experience and training, as determined by Classification and Compensation. If the staff

member's RTW position salary is less than his/her salary at the time of the injury, then s/he will be paid temporary partial disability benefits on that difference, as defined by Tennessee workers' compensation law.

E. **Duration**

1. The VOHC will periodically monitor the staff member's progress and potential for return to his/her pre-injury/illness position. Placement through the Return to Work Program is a temporary measure to facilitate early return to work and cannot exceed **90 Days** in duration, commencing upon the staff member's return to work.
2. If the staff member has not returned to his/her pre-injury position by the end of 90 days, then the staff member's participation in the Return to Work Program will end. To determine the staff member's employment status, the home department should confer with Employee Relations.
3. Any questions regarding this program should be referred to the VOHC.

Approved by Kevin Myatt, Chief Human Resource Officer  
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This policy is intended as a guideline to assist in the consistent application of University policies and programs for staff. The policy does not create a contract implied or expressed, with any Vanderbilt staff members, who are employees at will. Vanderbilt reserves the right to modify this policy in whole or in part, at anytime, at the discretion of the University.