

LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESSES

ORIGINATOR: Human Resource Administration

DATE: January, 1989

POLICY #89-1

I. PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines addressing the continued employment rights and responsibilities of employees with life-threatening illnesses and their co-workers.

II. APPLICABLE TO:

All University employees.

III. RESPONSIBILITY:

- A. It is the responsibility of the employee to provide physician certification as required when discharging and returning from sick leave.
- B. It is the responsibility of the supervisor/manager to handle the employee's health condition confidentially and take reasonable precautions to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for their employees.
- C. It is the responsibility of the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources Administration to administer the overall policy procedures.

IV. POLICY:

The University recognizes that employees with life-threatening illnesses, including but not limited to cancer, heart disease, and AIDS, may wish to continue to engage in as many of their normal pursuits as their condition allows, including work. As long as these employees are able to meet acceptable performance standards, and medical evidence indicates that their conditions are not a threat to themselves or others, managers should be sensitive to their conditions and ensure that they are treated consistently with other employees. At the same time, the University has an obligation to provide a safe work environment for all employees and, students. Every precaution should be taken to ensure that an employee's condition does not present a health and/or safety threat to other employees or students.

Consistent with this concern for employees with life-threatening illnesses, the University offers the following range of resources available through the Office of Human Resources Administration:

- A. Education of management and staff on terminal illness and specific life-threatening illnesses.
- B. Referral to agencies and organizations which offer supportive services for life-threatening illnesses.
- C. Focused consultation to assist employees in effectively managing health insurance, leave, and other benefits.

V. PROCEDURES:

- A. When dealing with situations involving employees with life-threatening illnesses, managers should:
 - 1. Remember that an employee's health condition is personal and confidential. Reasonable precautions should be taken to protect information regarding an employee's health condition. They should be sensitive to the fact that continued employment for an employee with a life-threatening illness may sometimes be therapeutically important in the remission or recovery process or may help to prolong that employee's life.
 - 2. Contact the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources Administration if they or other employees need information about terminal illness and specific life-threatening illness. Consultation and guidance will be given to assist in managing situations involving employees with life-threatening illnesses. Any concerns about the possible contagious nature of an employee's illness should be addressed to the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources Administration.
 - 3. Make reasonable accommodation for employees with life-threatening illnesses consistent with the needs of the division/ unit and Collective Bargaining Contracts. Also, consistent with Collective Bargaining Contracts, managers should make a reasonable attempt to transfer employees with life-threatening illnesses who request a transfer and are experiencing undue emotional stress.
 - 4. Be sensitive and responsive to co-worker's concerns, and emphasize employee education available through the Office of Human Resources Administration and the Rhode Island Employee Assistance Program. However, no special consideration need be given beyond normal transfer requests for employees who feel threatened by a co-worker's life-threatening illness.
 - 5. Consult with the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources Administration to determine if a statement should be obtained from the employee's attending physician that continued presence at work will pose no threat to the employee, co-workers or students. The University reserves the right to require an examination by a medical doctor appointed by the University.

- B. Employees are required to submit a Physician's Certification for sick leave (USP-15) or return from sick leave (USP-16) to the Office of Human Resources Administration.

- C. Employees should be encouraged to seek assistance from established community support groups for medical treatment and counseling services. Information on these can be requested through the Office of Human Resources Administration or directly from the Rhode Island Employee Assistance Program.

FORMS:

USP-15: Physician's Certification - Employee's Sick Leave

USP-16: Physician's Certification - Return From Sick Leave

