



## Lehigh University Human Resources Policy

Policy Number: 121  
Effective Date: 5/1/1999  
Revisions:  
Applicability: All Faculty and Staff

### SHORT TERM DISABILITY PLAN POLICY

#### **Purpose:**

Lehigh Policy on short term disability benefits for faculty and staff

#### **Policy:**

The *Short Term Disability Plan* provides eligible faculty and staff members with continued income and benefit protection if they become disabled and unable to work due to illness or injury (including pregnancy) while employed at Lehigh University. Benefits are paid for illness or injury exceeding ten (10) continuous working days. Illness or injuries of ten (10) or less working days are not eligible for benefits under this plan.

The plan applies to short term disabilities of twenty-six (26) weeks or less. Eligible faculty and staff members are covered by the terms of the plan beginning with the first day of scheduled work, provided that the faculty or staff member was actively at work on that day.

#### ***Income Protection***

The level of income protection available is defined by the salary continuation plan covering the employee and may depend on the employee's continuous service. If necessary, unused sick leave and vacation may be applied to this plan when salary continuation benefits are exhausted. The cost of the plan is borne by the University.

If the illness or injury is compensable under worker's compensation, the short term disability plan benefits may be used to supplement worker's compensation benefits.

#### ***Benefit Protection***

During the period of short term disability, coverage under group life insurance, long term disability, pension, dental insurance, and health insurance continue subject to the same terms and conditions applicable to active employees. All the other University benefits continue while receiving short term disability benefits. There is no incremental payment or extension of benefit periods provided as a result of holidays that may occur during the disability period.

#### ***Verification of Disability***

It is the employee's responsibility to maintain contact with Human Resources during the disability period unless the nature of the disability infringes on the employee's ability to do so. Application for benefits under the *Short Term Disability Plan* is initiated by submission of an *Information for Short Term Disability Benefits* form. Part I of the form is a statement from the employee providing information about the disability. It also provides authorization for the University to access medical information necessary to review the application for disability benefits. Part II is to be completed by the employee's physician. The physician's statement must include the date the employee's disability began and, when possible, the projected return to work date. Additional statements from the faculty or staff member's doctor may be requested during prolonged disabilities. The University reserves the right to require a second opinion from another physician. In the case of a second opinion, the University will select the physician and pay for the cost of the second opinion.

### ***Limitations***

- Short term disability benefits do not apply to any disability that occurs while on a leave of absence.
- If a disability occurs while on vacation, the benefit payments will begin the day the staff member is scheduled to return to work.
- If a staff member has multiple disabilities during a single employment year, the total amount of benefits available applies to all claims combined.
- Benefits are not available for any disability resulting from unlawful acts, willful intent to injure oneself, or as a result of working for another employer.

### ***When Short Term Disability Plan Benefits End***

Benefits under the *Short Term Disability Plan* end when the employee is released to return to work by a physician or after twenty-six (26) weeks of participation, whichever is sooner.

If the employee will not be released to return to work within twenty-six (26) weeks, application should be made for benefits under the *Long Term Disability (LTD) Insurance Plan*. Employees who are approved by the insurance carrier for LTD benefits will continue to have access to University benefits under the terms and conditions of the individual benefit plans except that all vacation accrual stops after the short term disability period.

Staff members who are not released to work within twenty-six (26) weeks may be subject to termination under Policy HR-116: *Replacing an Employee on Extended Leave*. These terminations do not adversely impact benefits provided to individuals who have been approved for LTD benefits.

Employees who are not returning to work may be paid for up to one-year's accrual of earned but unused vacation.

### ***Budgetary Support for Departments during Periods of Short Term Disability***

When an employee is out of work on short term disability, the department may need to replace the employee with a temporary employee, reassign duties to existing faculty or staff members, or have existing staff work overtime. There may be budgetary assistance available to those departments to help defray any staffing costs directly related to the employee's absence due to short term disability.

Supervisors of staff should contact Human Resources for more information. Academic Department Chairs should work directly with their Dean's Offices to secure budgetary support.

**Keywords:** STD, Maternity Leave, FML