

Psychiatric disability and work leave

Many people find it hard to work when feeling stressed. You may feel the situation is intolerable, or that it is impacting your personal life or effectiveness at work. Research has shown that most patients benefit from continuing to engage in regular activities and routines. Being out of a regular routine tends to intensify, not diminish, psychiatric symptoms.

TIME OFF FROM WORK

Interpersonal conflicts at work generally do not warrant time off. Unless you are diagnosed with a serious mental illness, a disagreement with a supervisor or co-workers does not constitute psychiatric illness or warrant psychiatric disability.

IF TIME OFF FROM WORK IS INDICATED DUE TO SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

Your therapist or psychiatrist will recommend an appropriate amount of time – usually a period of days to weeks. The expectation is that this time will be used to access treatment facilitating return to normal activities as soon as possible. Consult with the Human Resources Department at your work regarding any possible impact your psychiatric disability could have on your present or future employment.

Your provider will work with you to determine which treatment is indicated in your case. You may be referred for treatment such individual therapy, group treatment, and/or medication management. Some of these treatment options may include daily or multiple times a week sessions.

Any necessary forms for work leave should be submitted in advance of telehealth appointments or brought with you to office visits, as your provider may need to discuss with you aspects of the information requested.

TYPES OF WORK LEAVE

Sick days/PTO

You may be able to request intermittent “mental health days” under your paid sick time/PTO. Check with your supervisor or HR department about this.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Family and Medical Leave Act requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave to eligible employees for serious health conditions, or care of a child, spouse, or parent with a serious health condition. This leave can be taken as a block, intermittently or on a reduced work schedule. More information can be found at: <https://www.maine.gov/bhr/state-employees/rules-policies/policy-practices-manual/Employee-Rights-and-Responsibilities-Federal>

Short-Term Disability (STD)

Short term disability insurance is a benefit provided by some employers that covers a percentage of pre-disability income. The duration of this coverage varies, and eligibility is determined by the terms of the individual policy (not by your doctor). The carrier of your insurance may request that your doctor fill out a form regarding the impact of your health condition on your ability to perform your work functions, or they may ask for copies of your medical records.

Long-Term Disability (LTD)

Long term disability insurance, such as provided by SSI, is determined by providers at the Department of Social Services based on copies of your records. This type of functional assessment is not covered under your health plan. InterMed psychiatrists do not conduct these evaluations

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COMMON QUESTIONS

Can I file for a work leave extension?

A request for an extension of work leave can only be determined after a follow-up evaluation by the therapist or psychiatrist who initially recommended the leave. Refusal to participate in recommended treatment will result in no further extensions or completion of forms.

Does my insurance cover disability exams?

Fitness for duty evaluations, pre-employment examinations, commercial driver clearance, and other non-medically necessary examinations or clinical assessments are not a covered benefit under most insurance plans. These evaluations can be arranged with medical providers in the community who have a clinical expertise in that specialty on a fee-for-service basis, or with your employer.

Is psychiatric care covered by Workers Comp?

If you feel your psychiatric illness is the result of a work-related experience (an “industrial injury”), you may be entitled to the Worker’s Compensation benefits. Please contact your employer regarding these concerns. InterMed psychiatrists do not perform workers comp evaluations.