

from the HR Department
RIT HUMAN RESOURCES

NEW PROCESS FOR REPORTING DISABILITY ABSENCE

Dear Colleague:

Last year, RIT announced major improvements to our disability benefits program, including:

- The short-term disability plan, which now provides 100% pay for up to 8 weeks and then 80% pay for up to an additional 18 weeks for an illness (including pregnancy, which is considered an illness under law) or injury that is not work-related;
- A new cash-out option for the current year's unused sick leave benefits for non-exempt (hourly) employees;
- Replacement of sick leave with salary continuation for exempt (salaried) staff and faculty; and
- Grandfathering of existing sick leave banks for employees with unused sick leave on June 30, 2005.

In 2006, our focus has turned to improving the disability management process. This newsletter describes how the new process will work and what your new responsibilities will be for reporting absences.

RIT is making this process change to achieve the following key goals:

- Create a more efficient, streamlined and centralized process for managing disability administration.
- Improve consistency, accuracy and effectiveness of recordkeeping.
- Ensure confidentiality of employees' medical information by using an outside firm to manage disability administration.
- Relieve much of the burden currently on supervisors and Human Resources for this function.

The new process will begin on July 1, 2006. Please read the information in this newsletter carefully and plan to participate in one of the open forums taking place on campus this month (see page 6 for details). It is important that you fully understand the new steps you will need to take when reporting an absence on and after July 1st.



Patty Spinelli, Assistant Vice President
HUMAN RESOURCES



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HUMAN RESOURCES – COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

New Streamlined Process for Reporting Absences

Beginning July 1, 2006, RIT will introduce a new employee reporting process for disability-related absences. As part of the new process, Unum Provident (Unum), our insurance company for short-term and long-term disability benefits (as well as life insurance and accidental death & dismemberment insurance), will provide expanded disability management services to RIT and its employees.

The new reporting process will result in the following changes:

- Employees will call Unum's toll-free telephone number to report certain absences. Employees will still be required to notify their supervisor whenever absent.
- Unum, not RIT Human Resources, will now coordinate disability paperwork, including medical certifications, with employees and physicians. HR will serve as the liaison for communications between Unum and supervisors.

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- Unum will determine which absences qualify for designation under the Family & Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA).
 - Unum will coordinate forms, medical certifications and correspondence, and will maintain FMLA recordkeeping on RIT's behalf.
 - RIT supervisors will no longer be required to do so (see the "FMLA Basics" article on page 3 of this newsletter).

Advantages for Employees

A simpler, more helpful process. Instead of contacting RIT Human Resources, you will contact Unum in the situations defined in the "Reporting a Work Absence Under the New Process" article on page 5 of this newsletter. Since Unum's service center is staffed between 8:00AM and 8:00PM Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, you will have more opportunities to connect with a live person than previously.

Faster processing of disability benefits. Since Unum will now be handling the entire process (no longer needing to interface with RIT to start the process) we expect the processing of disability benefits to be quicker and more efficient.

Confidential information managed off-site. RIT Human Resources considers protection of employees' confidential information one of its key operating principles. An added advantage of working through an outside organization, such as Unum, is that employees may feel more comfortable sharing personal information with an unknown person in an off-site call center, rather than someone they may interact with on campus.

Improved quality of FMLA process. The new process is anticipated to raise the quality of RIT's FMLA process, which currently is handled between RIT supervisors and Human Resources. Having Unum involved upfront will help ensure accuracy and consistency in designating absences as covered (or not covered) under FMLA, and in keeping the necessary records. Unum has vast expertise in this area, and handles this process for more than 480,000 employees of organizations across the United States.

The New Disability Reporting Process applies to:

All full-time and extended part-time faculty and staff (exempt and non-exempt). Although faculty and exempt staff do not report their time in the Kronos timekeeping system, there is an important reason why they must report absences to Unum. Consistently applying this new process ensures that all employees receive their rights under FMLA (see the "FMLA Basics" article on page 3 of this newsletter). In addition, if a faculty member or exempt staff person is going to be absent long enough to qualify for disability benefits, Unum will now be responsible for initiating the process for determining these benefits.

The new process DOES NOT apply to:

Student employees, part-time employees or adjunct faculty. Disability absences for these groups will continue to be handled through the Human Resources Department. Student employees are not eligible for FMLA coverage. Adjuncts and part-time employees typically do not work the required number of hours in a year to qualify for FMLA leave. However, if there is a possibility for eligibility of an absence for individuals in this group, Human Resources will review the situation and make final determinations.



All RIT supervisors are required to attend a training session regarding the new process. The first set of sessions was held in May. Another set is scheduled for June through HR's Center for Professional Development (CPD).



FMLA Basics

The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was signed into law in 1993 for the purpose of guaranteeing job protection to eligible employees who are absent from work due to specified family and medical reasons defined in the law.

Eligibility

Eligible employees are:

- Full-time and extended part-time faculty and staff;
- Who worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 months prior to the first day of leave; and
- Who completed 12 months of employment at RIT prior to the first day of leave.

Student employees, part-time employees and adjunct faculty are not typically eligible.

Benefits

FMLA provides up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during a 12 month period. If an employee qualifies for paid leave for the absence (such as sick leave, salary continuation, short-term disability or workers' compensation), the paid leave and unpaid leave will run concurrently.

Example: Joan, a non-exempt staff employee, is absent due to her own serious health condition (which is an FMLA-qualifying event, as described in the following section). Joan is absent for 10 days. The entire 10 days will be counted toward the maximum 12 weeks of FMLA absence in a 12-month period. During the first 5 days, Joan may use her sick leave to receive pay. Because Joan is absent longer than 5 working days, she may also receive Short-Term Disability benefits for the remaining 5 days.

If the FMLA-qualifying absence is for a reason that does not qualify for pay continuation, the employee may either use vacation or take the leave without pay.

During FMLA leave, an employee's job is protected. This means that when you return from an absence covered by FMLA, you must be restored to your original job, or to an equivalent job with equivalent pay and benefits. In addition, your use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that you earned or were entitled to before you used the time off. To qualify for FMLA job protection, you are required to report your absence to Unum as soon as possible, but without exception, no later than two work days after your return to work.

For FMLA-eligibility purposes, the 12-month period is a rolling 12 months, counted from the first day an employee takes FMLA leave.

Example: John begins FMLA leave on July 5, 2006 and uses 12 work weeks of FMLA leave before returning to work. John is not eligible for FMLA leave again until July 6, 2007.

Qualifying Absences

FMLA provides job-protected leave under the following situations:

- Care of the employee's newborn child, within the first 12 months following birth.
- Placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care, within the first 12 months following the placement.
- Care of the employee's spouse, child or parent who has a serious health condition.
- Inability of the employee to perform one or more essential functions of his or her own job due to the employee's own serious health condition.

Care of an employee's domestic partner with a serious health condition does not qualify for FMLA leave under the Federal law. However, RIT strives to treat domestic partners similarly to spouses whenever legally possible. Therefore, RIT will provide leave that is equivalent to FMLA leave for absences taken to care for an employee's domestic partner with a serious health condition. In order to use this benefit, the employee must have an Affidavit of Domestic Partnership on file with RIT Human Resources. Information about domestic partner benefits and the process for completing the affidavit can be found on the Human Resources website at <http://finweb.rit.edu/humanresources/benefits/domestic/>.

Care of another individual, such as a parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, etc., does not qualify for FMLA leave under the Federal law. This type of leave is granted at the discretion of the employee's supervisor, and is not eligible for FMLA job protection.

"Absence" includes full and partial days of absence. It also includes intermittent leave, in as little as one-hour blocks, or a reduced leave schedule, under certain circumstances described in the law.

Terms to Know

The following definitions of commonly-used FMLA terms are provided to help you better understand the information in this newsletter about our new disability management process. Please note that many of these definitions are directly from the law.

Child

The employee's child (including adopted, foster, stepchild and child for whom the employee has been appointed legal guardian) who is under age 18, or age 18 or over if the child has a serious health condition and is incapable of self-care due to a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of his or her life activities.

Chronic condition

An ongoing medical condition which:

- Requires visits from time to time for treatment by a health care provider or by a nurse or physician's assistant under direct supervision of a health care provider; and
- Continues over an extended period of time; and
- May cause occasional rather than a continuing period of incapacity (e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy).

Disability

An illness or injury that is not work related and results in absence from work which is certified by a physician. Pregnancy-related conditions resulting in absence are also considered disabilities by law.

Family member

The employee's spouse, domestic partner (for whom an Affidavit of Domestic Partnership is on file with RIT Human Resources), child (including adopted, foster, stepchild and child for whom the employee has been appointed legal guardian), and parent.

FMLA

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, a Federal law.

Intermittent leave

FMLA leave taken in separate blocks of time due to a single qualifying reason.

Reduced leave schedule

A reduction in the employee's usual number of working hours per work week, or hours per work day, for a period of time, normally from full time to part time.

Serious health condition

An illness, impairment, physical or mental condition that involves:

1. Inpatient care in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility, or any subsequent treatment in connection with such inpatient care; or
2. Continuing treatment by a health care provider. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - A period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days and any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity that also involves continuing treatment by a health care provider;
 - A period of incapacity due to pregnancy or prenatal care;
 - A period of incapacity or treatment for such incapacity due to a chronic serious health condition;
 - A period of incapacity which is permanent or long-term due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective; or
 - A period of absence to receive multiple treatments, including any period of recovery, for restorative surgery after an accident or other injury or for a condition that would likely result in a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days in the absence of medical intervention or treatment.

Work week

Your scheduled hours per week based on your schedule in Oracle.

Workers' Compensation

Provides benefits for an illness or injury that occurs on the job.

Reporting a Work Absence Under the New Process

What You Need to Do

Always call your supervisor whenever you are absent for any reason!

You do not need to give details about your medical condition, just let him or her know that you are unable to work.

ALSO, call Unum's toll-free phone number in these situations:

- On the 1st day of an absence:
 - For your or a family member's chronic condition.
 - For intermittent leave, including partial days, due to your own or a family member's serious health condition.
 - To care for your newborn child, or due to placement of a child in your household for adoption or foster care.
- By the 3rd day of a continuous absence:
 - For your own disability (non-work related illness, injury or maternity) or workers' compensation (work-related illness or injury).
 - To care for your family member who has a serious health condition.

If your absence is planned in advance, you may contact Unum before your absence begins. This may be the case, for instance, if you are undergoing elective surgery, or for a maternity disability.

The sooner you call, the better. If you do not call Unum during your absence, you have until two workdays following your return to work in order for your absence to be protected as FMLA leave. If you don't call Unum, your pay may be delayed for days that are eligible for Short-Term Disability benefits.

If you are unsure whether you should call Unum to report your absence, go ahead and call. The Unum representative will review your situation in order to determine the appropriate next steps.



**Call Unum Provident toll-free at
1-800-605-2802 (V) Or 1-800-887-2180 (TTY)**

Necessary Information to Provide to Unum When You Call:

- Your name, address, phone number, birth date & employee identification number
- RIT's Policy Number — 462235
- Your employer's name (Rochester Institute of Technology)
- Your supervisor's name & work phone number
- Your job title & a brief description of what you do
- Your last day worked & first day absent
- Date of expected return to work, if known, or the actual date of return, if you have already returned to work
- Other pertinent information related to your absence & employment

If you are absent due to your own injury, illness or medical condition, you will also need to provide:

- Your doctor's name, address & phone number
- The date you were first treated by your doctor, the date of your most recent visit and, if applicable, the date of your next scheduled visit
- A brief description of your medical condition, or the date & description of an injury
- Work restrictions or limitations advised by your physician, if any

Open Forum Schedule

Tuesday, June 5	3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Sol Heumann Hall, Activity Room, Bldg 47
Wednesday, June 7	9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Gordon Field House, Reception Room 1540
Thursday, June 8	11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	CIMS, Room 2140
Monday, June 19	1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Gordon Field House, Reception Room 1540
Wednesday, June 21	1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	CIMS, Room 2140
Thursday, June 22	8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	Sol Heumann Hall, Activity Room, Bldg 47

Sign language interpreter will be provided upon request, subject to availability.

For questions about the new process for reporting absences, please contact Sue Quinn in Human Resources at (585) 475-2429 (V) or (585) 475-2420 (TTY) or spq1248@rit.edu.

The logo for the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), consisting of the letters 'R·I·T' in a white, serif font, centered on a dark blue rectangular background.

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RIT 2006 Benefits Update Newsletter is distributed to employees to help explain RIT's Employee Benefits plans, describe features and provide hints on how to better use benefits. Some information contained in this newsletter may not apply to you. This newsletter does not replace the document/contract, unless specifically identified as a change in plan provision. If there is any confusion or conflict regarding plan features, the document/contract will be the final authority. RIT reserves the right to change, modify, discontinue, or terminate benefits at any time for any reason.

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