

ADMINISTRATIVE MEDICAL/MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE OF ABSENCE

POLICY AND PROCESS

I. Introduction

The George Washington University wants each of its students to be successful at the University and is committed to helping students reach their potential within the University environment. The University recognizes, however, that some students may be subject to stress from within and without the campus environment, and that in the course of their academic careers some students may have medical or mental health issues that challenge their ability to succeed at the University. Therefore, in addition to many academic support services, the University also offers counseling services, disability support services, student health services, and referrals to many nearby providers from which students may seek support and treatment.

II. Guidelines

The University takes seriously reports of students at risk due to medical and/or mental health issues, whether reported to University officials through friends, roommates, professors, residence hall staff, parents, or other means. The University's primary concerns in response to such reports are the wellbeing of the student in question and the wellbeing of others in the campus community. Although self-injurious or self-threatening behaviors are generally treated as medical or mental health issues, each situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

For most students affected by such issues, appropriate treatment and support which is available at the University or through nearby providers will be sufficient to enable continuing participation in University activities. Some students, however, may choose to withdraw temporarily from the University to improve their situation, and some may need to restrict certain of their activities and/or modify their behavior in order to remain at GW. Voluntary medical and mental health leave policies and procedures have long been established at GW and are covered in separate documents. In most instances where the University has concerns about a student's ability to continue participation in University residence life, classes or other activities, those concerns will be discussed with the affected student, and appropriate arrangements made to address the individual student's situation. Where it appears that a medical or mental health assessment may be called for, the University may require the student to seek such assessment. In some situations, when the University believes that a student presents a condition or exhibits behavior, including statements, which pose or threaten a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the student or others, the University may place the student on an administrative leave of absence. In making this evaluation and establishing the terms and conditions of the administrative leave of absence, the University will look at: the nature and severity of the potential harm, the imminence of the potential harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, the duration of the risk, the ability to mitigate the risk and the impact on others in the campus community. This determination will be based on an individualized assessment of the ability of the student to function safely at the University and within its community and, when available, will be based on the assessments of medical or mental health professionals.

III. Administrative Leave Process

A. *Interim Administrative Leave.* When the University believes that a student presents a condition or has exhibited behavior that presents a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the student or others, the Associate Dean of Students or comparable designee, may place a student on an interim administrative leave. Where reasonably possible, the decision to place a student on interim administrative leave will include consideration of an assessment by Student Health Services, the University Counseling Center or other appropriate medical or mental health professionals, which assessment will also assist the student and the University with administering the leave process. In communicating any such assessment to University administration, confidentiality and privacy will be respected as required by law and to the extent reasonably practical in an emergency situation. Where an administrative leave results in a withdrawal from current course-work, the University may at its discretion waive established time-limits for refund requests or may, on a case by case basis, credit previously paid tuition for coursework towards future coursework.

B. *Notice of Leave.* A student placed on interim administrative leave shall be informed in writing by the Associate Dean of Students, or comparable designee, of the leave decision, the basis for the University's concern, the effective date of the leave, the specific terms and conditions of the leave including the conditions for cessation of the leave (if applicable), and the student's review rights. A student who has been placed on interim administrative leave without an assessment by Student Health Services or the University Counseling Center usually will be informed that he or she must contact Student Health Services or the University Counseling Center for an assessment. After this assessment, the Associate Dean of Students, or comparable designee, may determine that the interim administrative leave is not necessary, that it can be modified or that the previous interim leave decision should not be modified, and will so notify the student. This determination will be based upon any and all information and documentation available to the Associate Dean or Students, or comparable designee, including information from treating professionals and University offices.

C. *Review of Interim Leave Decision.* A student placed on interim administrative leave will as soon as practicable be given the opportunity to appear before a review panel composed of University faculty, administrators or professionals with relevant training to explain why the leave should not continue. The student will be permitted to respond to the University's concerns and to be accompanied by a support person (not employed by GW). All relevant information available or made available to the review panel will be considered. If after the review it is determined by the University that the student does not pose or threaten a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the student or others, the student will be informed in writing that he or she may remain enrolled but may be advised of conditions on his or her continued enrollment. A student who is determined to be a threat to himself/herself or others will be informed in writing that they will be withdrawn from current courses as an administrative leave. The student will be advised of the length of the leave and the conditions, if any, of the student's return to the University.

D. *Appeal Rights.* A student who wishes to appeal the decision of the review panel must submit the basis for an appeal in writing to the Dean of Students within five (5) business days after the student's receipt of the decision of the review panel. Failure to seek a review of the interim administrative leave, or to appeal of the review panel's decision, will render the applicable decision final.