

# Health Leave of Absence & Return Policy

Calvin University

## I. Introduction

As a mission-driven institution that “equips students to think deeply, to act justly, and to act wholeheartedly as Christ’s agents of renewal in the world,” Calvin University places a high value on the physical and mental health of all students. Cultivating a safe and supportive environment for the university community is a priority. On occasions when a student’s health needs interfere with their ability to continue academic studies at Calvin University in a safe and successful manner, the goal of the university is to support the student in addressing those needs and returning to complete their studies.

Students are encouraged to prioritize their health and safety and take steps toward recovery, even if academic progress must be delayed. A Health Leave of Absence indicates that the student is on leave to address personal health concerns, and is one of four types of Leaves of Absences as follows:

1. Personal Leave or Withdrawal: voluntary leave related to family, finances, wellness, work, or other personal circumstances interrupting ability to proceed with academics
2. **Health Leave: voluntary or involuntary leave related to specific physical or mental health conditions, including treatment of illness or injury or hospitalization**
3. Academic Suspension or Dismissal: involuntary leave related to academic standing
4. Student Conduct Suspension or Dismissal: voluntary or involuntary leave related to a violation of the Student Conduct Code or other university expectations

A Health Leave provides opportunity for a student to step away from their studies temporarily, with the intention to apply for reenrollment after satisfying any conditions for return. Typically, a leave of absence is for one semester or one academic year. Students are encouraged to use time away from Calvin to focus on treatment and recovery, and to think carefully about whether outside studies fit into their plan for improved health and successful reengagement with academic studies at the culmination of the leave.

The following policy outlines two types of Health Leaves: voluntary and involuntary. It also outlines the process that will be followed when a student seeks reenrollment at the conclusion of a Health Leave. This policy applies to all academic programs at Calvin University, whether on-campus or remote. Students will be given the option to take a voluntary leave before a decision is made with respect to an involuntary leave. In all cases, the university will consider whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures or, where applicable, the provision of auxiliary aids and services, would permit the student to continue their studies without taking a Health Leave. Students approved for a Health Leave are responsible for contacting all applicable offices and departments to ensure closure in all areas prior to the beginning of their leave, unless the student’s medical condition precludes them from doing so.

## II. Voluntary Health Leave of Absence

A Voluntary Health Leave of Absence is a voluntary and temporary leave from the university due to a student’s physical or mental health needs. A Voluntary Health Leave is available when a student’s health

condition significantly interferes with the student's ability to function successfully within the programs of Calvin University.

#### A. Requesting a Voluntary Health Leave

A student may initiate a request for a Voluntary Health Leave by contacting the Dean of Students or the Chair of CARE Team, with the option to initiate the process by submitting the Student Request to Leave form along with the Provider Request to Leave form. The Health Leave request will be reviewed by the Dean of Students, the Chair of CARE Team, or another designated representative (hereafter referred to as the Dean of Students). In some situations, the student may be requested to sign a consent form permitting further communication with the student's health care provider(s). The Dean of Students will only share information about the student's health condition as necessary to facilitate the student's Health Leave or to protect the health and safety of the university community.

The deadline to apply for a Voluntary Health Leave for the current semester is the last day of the semester. A Voluntary Health Leave request made after the student has completed the semester will be considered only for the upcoming semester. A student in poor academic standing or subject to pending disciplinary proceedings is not precluded from requesting a Voluntary Health Leave, but the university will make an individualized assessment as to whether any pending disciplinary or academic proceedings will continue or wait for the student's return from leave.

The Voluntary Health Leave request process can occur through phone, videoconference, and/or email if needed to facilitate a student's engagement with needed treatment and recovery. If the student is unable to complete the form or meet with the Dean of Students due to their medical status (e.g., hospitalization or inability to function independently), a parent or guardian may do so on behalf of the student.

#### B. Voluntary Health Leave Plan

Once the Voluntary Health Leave has been approved, the student and Dean of Students will meet to create an individualized Health Leave Plan that must be completed by the student while on leave. The plan may include medical treatment recommended by the student's health care provider (including information from the Provider Request to Leave form) and other requirements for reenrollment, such as resolving incomplete grades.

The Dean of Students will apply a registration hold to the student's account with the Admissions Department and Registrar's Office. The student must satisfactorily complete the Health Leave Plan before the university will approve the student's return to classes.

#### C. Leave Coordinator

The Dean of Students will appoint a leave coordinator from outside of the Health Leave decision-making process (e.g., Student Success staff) to serve as a neutral process resource for a student approved for Voluntary Health Leave. The coordinator will answer questions about the leave process from referral through reenrollment.

### III. Involuntary Health Leave of Absence

An Involuntary Health Leave of Absence is an involuntary leave from the university due to the impact of a student's physical or mental health needs on their ability to safely continue in the university environment.

#### A. Criteria for Involuntary Health Leave

An Involuntary Health Leave is rare, and occurs only when at least one of the following criteria are met:

1. The student has engaged or threatened to engage in behavior that poses a significant risk to the health or safety of individuals or to the campus community as a whole. A "significant risk" exists when there is a high probability of substantial harm and not just a slightly increased, speculative, or remote risk.
2. The student's behavior creates significant disruption of the university environment.

and also all of the following criteria are met:

- no reasonable accommodations or mitigating measures can adequately reduce that risk or disruption
- perceived risks to safety are not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations
- the student is unwilling to take a Voluntary Health Leave of Absence (as outlined in Section II)

To determine whether a student meeting the above criteria needs to be placed on an Involuntary Health Leave, the Dean of Students will work in collaboration with Disability Services and staff members from other applicable offices (see Section III.B.4) to conduct an individualized assessment. The individualized assessment will rely on current medical knowledge, or on the best available objective evidence, to ascertain: the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury or significant harm will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures or, where applicable, the provision of auxiliary aids and services, will sufficiently mitigate the risk. In conducting this assessment, the Dean of Students will review the student's available medical and behavioral history and consider whether the behavior is persistent and/or high acuity. The Dean of Students will also determine what, if any, steps the university will take to facilitate the leave and potential return of the student.

The policy for Involuntary Health Leave is consistent with [Calvin's Discrimination and Harassment Policy Statement](#), which prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of any type of disability or any other characteristic protected by applicable law in the administration of the university's programs and activities. Calvin offers a range of resources, support services, and accommodations to address the physical and mental health needs of students. However, the needs of students sometimes require a level of care that exceeds the care the university can reasonably provide. Before placing any student on Involuntary Health Leave, the Dean of Students will conduct an individualized assessment as described above, consulting with the office of Disability Services to determine if there are reasonable accommodations or mitigating measures that would permit the student to continue in the university community without taking a leave of absence.

## B. Procedures for an Involuntary Health Leave

The Dean of Students may be notified about a student who may meet the criteria of an Involuntary Health Leave from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, the student, the student's academic advisor, an academic department, Residence Life staff, or a member of the CARE Team. Before placing a student on an Involuntary Health Leave, the following procedures will be initiated.

1. The Dean of Students will **consider potential accommodations** and/or modifications that could eliminate the need for an Involuntary Health Leave (e.g., Voluntary Health Leave, academic accommodations, housing and dining accommodations). The Dean of Students will consult with the office of Disability Services in making this determination.
2. The Dean of Students will **provide the student with a written notice** indicating that an Involuntary Health Leave is under consideration, including the following:
  - a. reason(s) why the student is being considered for an Involuntary Health Leave
  - b. contact information for the office of Disability Services (which can provide information about accommodations)
  - c. contact information for a leave coordinator (e.g., Student Success staff), a staff member outside of the Health Leave decision-making process who will serve as a neutral process resource to answer any student questions about the leave process from referral through reenrollment.
  - d. an invitation to meet with the Dean of Students or respond in writing before a decision regarding Health Leave is made and a specified time period within which to do so
  - e. notice that the student has the option to take a Voluntary Health Leave
  - f. request to sign a consent form for exchange of information with health care provider(s), if applicable, and a specified time period within which to do so
  - g. a copy of this policy
3. The Dean of Students will **ask the student to provide consent for Calvin personnel to exchange information with the student's healthcare provider(s)** regarding issues relevant and appropriate to the consideration of an Involuntary Health Leave, with the option to use the Provider Request to Leave form to gather the information once consent is provided. Such consent will seek only such information as needed for the university to conduct the individualized assessment of the student's need for leave.
  - a. If a student refuses to provide such consent or to respond within the set time frame, the Dean of Students may proceed with the assessment based on information in the Dean's possession at the time.
  - b. If the Dean of Students determines that the information provided by the treatment provider(s) is incomplete, requires further explanation/clarification, or is inconsistent with other information in the student's record, they may contact the treatment provider(s) to obtain additional information (with proper authorization).
  - c. The university may require the student to undergo an additional evaluation by an independent and objective health care professional designated by Calvin to ascertain if the student can safely continue to be a member of the academic community and align behavior with established conduct expectations so as not to cause a substantial disruption to the educational environment. Every effort will be

made to consider a student's financial situation and insurance coverage in making recommendations for evaluation.

4. In addition to consultation with Disability Services, the Dean of Students may also **confer with other individuals** regarding the need for an Involuntary Health Leave, as feasible and when appropriate. Conferring individuals could include staff from the following departments:
  - a. Residence Life/Housing (ex. Director of Residence Life)
  - b. Academic Division (ex. provost, faculty members, academic advisor)
  - c. Center for Student Success
  - d. Center for Counseling and Wellness, with appropriate authorization
  - e. Health Services, with appropriate authorization
  - f. CARE Team
  - g. Other departments as appropriate to individual situation
5. During the assessment process, the student will be provided an opportunity to meet with the Dean of Students and provide relevant documents or other information, including the result of any evaluation conducted by the student's own treating health professional. The student is encouraged to provide information about remedial efforts to address problematic behavior and the student's plan to mitigate any ongoing risk of harm. At this meeting, the Dean of Students will seek the cooperation of the student, including discussion of possible measures to reduce the risk of harm or a Voluntary Health Leave.
6. In conducting the individualized assessment, the Dean of Students will **pay careful attention to the criteria** for Involuntary Health Leave (as outlined in Section III.A). Significant weight will be given to the opinion of the student's treatment provider(s), including those identified by the student, regarding the student's ability to function academically and safely at the university with or without reasonable accommodations.
7. Following these consultations and review of relevant documentation and available information, the Dean of Students will **make a decision** as to whether the student should be placed on Involuntary Health Leave. The decision will be made in a reasonably timely manner. If a student has been removed from the campus community during this review, every effort will be made to reach a decision within one week, provided the student responds in a timely manner to requests for information and, if appropriate, evaluation. If an Involuntary Health Leave is imposed, the decision will include a time frame for when the student must leave the university, when the student is eligible to apply for reenrollment, and any conditions that must be satisfied before return to classes. If an Involuntary Health Leave is not imposed, the Dean of Students may impose conditions and/or requirements under which the student is allowed to remain at Calvin.
8. In determining conditions for reenrollment (or eligibility to remain on campus), the Dean of Students will work collaboratively with the student to **create an individualized Health Leave Plan** to support the student's current and/or future participation in campus life and academic courses. This individualized plan will focus on addressing the reasons for the Involuntary Health Leave, with the goal of preparing the student to re-engage safely with the campus community and succeed academically. The plan may include the following:
  - a. medical treatment recommended by the student's health care provider (including information from the Provider Request to Leave form)

- b. health-related goals and resources identified by the student
- c. other requirements for reenrollment or continued enrollment, such as resolving incomplete grades
- d. resources available to the student in completing the plan

Every effort will be made to consider a student's financial situation and insurance coverage in setting conditions of eligibility. Nonadherence to the individualized plan may impact the student's continued or future enrollment at Calvin, and the plan must be satisfactorily completed before a student will be readmitted after a Health Leave.

9. **Written notice of the decision** about Involuntary Health Leave will be provided to the student. The notice will include the following information:
  - a. If an Involuntary Health Leave is imposed
    - i. basis for the decision
    - ii. time frame for when the student must leave the university
    - iii. when the student is eligible to apply for reenrollment at the university
    - iv. conditions and/or requirements the student must satisfy before reenrollment
    - v. copy of Health Leave Plan, if applicable
    - vi. information about the student's right to reasonable accommodations during the return process
    - vii. information about the student's right to appeal and to reasonable accommodations during the appeal process
    - viii. contact information for the Center for Student Success and other applicable resource offices (including International Admissions and the Center for Intercultural Student Development, if applicable)
  - b. If an Involuntary Health Leave is not imposed
    - i. basis for the decision
    - ii. conditions and/or requirements under which the student is allowed to remain at the university
    - iii. copy of individualized Health Support Plan, if applicable
    - iv. information about the student's right to reasonable accommodations
    - v. contact information for the Center for Student Success and other applicable resource offices

### C. Appeal

If a student disagrees with the imposition of an Involuntary Health Leave, they may appeal within three business days of notification of the decision. The appeal must be made in writing to the Vice President for Student Life and may relate to the leave decision itself and/or the conditions imposed to remain or to return. The appeal must specify the particular substantive and/or procedural basis for the appeal and relate to one or more of the following considerations:

1. Were the proper facts and criteria brought to bear on the decision?
2. Is there any new information not previously available to the student or university that may change the outcome of the decision-making process?
3. Were there any procedural irregularities that materially affected the outcome of the matter to the detriment of the appellant?

4. Given the proper facts, criteria, and procedures, was the decision a reasonable one?

Appeals that express general dissatisfaction with the decision of the Dean of Students will not be accepted. Any student appeal submitted within the allotted amount of time will be reviewed by at least three members of the Health Leave of Absence Appeal Committee, which is comprised of the core members listed below, or their designees, and may include additional relevant individuals, depending on the individual appeal:

- Assistant Director of Coordinated Care
- Director of the Office of Student Conduct
- Director of Residence Life
- Director of the Center for Counseling and Wellness
- Director of Health Services
- Director of the Center for Intercultural Student Development
- Director of Campus Safety
- Chair of CARE Team

A minimum of three committee members will review each appeal and make a recommendation within five business days to the Vice President for Student Life, or another designated representative who may not be the Dean of Students (hereafter referred to as the Vice President), who will afford significant weight to the committee's recommendation. The Vice President will respond to the student's appeal within three business days of receipt of the committee's recommendations.

The appeal process is designed to remain individualized and interactive, and at any point before the final determination, the student may submit additional information relative to the student's care and/or progress. Such information may include a student's statement, additional documentation from a health care provider, a statement by an advocate for the student, or any other information a student wishes to provide. All information will be considered. If the student is unable to submit an appeal due to their medical condition (e.g., hospitalization or inability to function independently), a parent or guardian may do so on behalf of the student.

After reviewing the matter fully, the Vice President will issue a written decision affirming, modifying, or reversing the decision to place the student on Involuntary Health Leave. This response constitutes the final decision of the university, and no other appeals are available.

#### IV. Additional components of Health Leave process

In both types of Health Leave (voluntary or involuntary), a student must leave the university within the time frame set forth by the Dean of Students. The leave will remain in effect until it is determined, after an individualized assessment, that the student has sufficiently addressed the concerns leading to the Health Leave and is ready to return to the university (with or without reasonable accommodations). Students seeking reenrollment may demonstrate their individual readiness through compliance with their Health Leave Plan (including any university requirements applicable to returning from a leave and any conditions mandated by the Dean of Students or Vice President for Student Life), as well as through other experiences such as treatment, education, work, and community service.

Calvin recognizes the sensitive and confidential nature of a Health Leave. Calvin's use and disclosure of information related to the students' Health Leave will be guided by laws governing the privacy of student information, such as FERPA, and the limited exceptions for disclosure provided by law. At any time during the leave process, the university may notify a student's parent, guardian, emergency contact, or other individual, consistent with the law, if notification is deemed appropriate.

Students on a Health Leave are not registered and therefore do not have the rights and privileges of registered students, typically maintaining the same access to the university's facilities and events as the general public. While on a Health Leave, students are generally not allowed to participate in any university student activities, attend classes or labs, or reside in or visit on-campus student housing. University ID cards must be returned to the university during the leave and/or card access will be deactivated.

The primary goal for students on Health Leave is for the student to address the medical condition that caused the leave. Students are encouraged to consult with the Dean of Students and the Center for Student Success about whether engagement with for-credit classes at another institution would be beneficial for preparing to return to studies at Calvin after their Health Leave.

Tuition and housing costs that were paid by the student for courses and housing not utilized during the term in which the leave occurs will be refunded per the university's withdrawal/tuition refund policy. No additional refunds are available for a Health Leave, whether voluntary or involuntary. Students should be aware the university may not be able to offer the same financial aid or support upon their return that they were provided upon their previous admittance.

Students taking Health Leave are responsible for contacting all applicable offices/departments to ensure closure in all areas, such as the following examples:

- Center for Student Success – cancel course registration, determine tuition refund eligibility, update contact information, view/resolve holds, verify academic standing, discuss anticipated disability accommodations upon return from leave if applicable, discuss impact on veteran/ROTC benefits, etc.
- Major department (academic study) – meet with advisor to inform of Health Leave, discuss remaining degree requirements, etc.
- Financial Aid – discuss effects of Health Leave on financial status and scholarships, check/reconcile account balance, arrange payment plan, etc.
- Residence Life – cancel housing contract, arrange for move-out, return student ID card, cancel meal plan, etc.
- Health Services & Center for Counseling and Wellness – check status of student health insurance, arrange for transfer of care if applicable, etc.
- Hekman Library – return any outstanding book or other library materials
- Athletic Department – confirm athletic eligibility upon return from Health Leave if applicable
- On-campus employer and/or internship supervisor – notify of departure from position for Health Leave
- International Admissions – meet with immigration coordinator to discuss visa status (international students only)



If the student is unable to contact applicable offices due to their medical status (e.g., hospitalization or inability to function independently), a parent or guardian may do so on behalf of the student.

Departments may require specific action prior to or upon completion of the leave. It may also be necessary to consult additional offices, not listed here, to complete the leave process. Students are encouraged to request help from the Dean of Students and/or the Center for Student Success in ensuring closure with applicable offices/departments as needed.

Academic withdrawal occurs separately from leaves of absences. Information about academic withdrawal deadlines and procedures can be obtained through the Center for Student Success. Students on a Health Leave will have a notation on their transcript that reads "Leave of Absence."

Academic credit for coursework completed elsewhere may be allowed to transfer toward a Calvin degree. Students should consult with the Registrar's Office and their academic department prior to taking any coursework while on a Health Leave.

Students who withdraw as part of a Health Leave of Absence must apply for reenrollment through the school's regular admissions process. If a student does not plan to return to the university, the student should notify the leave coordinator at their earliest convenience.

## V. Returning from a health leave

Calvin University wants to ensure that students can successfully return from a Health Leave of Absence (either voluntary or involuntary). To support this process, students who wish to be readmitted must demonstrate they are able to safely resume their program and will not be disruptive to the community. Completion of the student's Health Leave Plan will be considered in evaluating readiness to return.

To return from leave, the student must meet the general requirements all students must meet when returning to Calvin after a leave of absence, as well as any conditions mandated by the university through the Health Leave Plan. The student may be required to submit additional documentation related to the factors in their Health Leave Plan as part of an individualized assessment. The Disability Services office provides supports to students seeking reasonable accommodations in the return process as necessary.

Generally, a student will not be permitted to return to the university until one full term has elapsed or until the leave period designated in the Health Leave Plan has elapsed and all conditions and/or requirements are met. Request to return from a Health Leave (voluntary or involuntary) should be initiated by the student two months prior to return to Calvin University, with the following procedures:

1. The student will **complete the Readiness to Return Student Form** online as a written request to return to the university from Health Leave, which will be reviewed by the Dean of Students, and will request a meeting with the Dean of Students.
2. The Dean of Students **may require the student to provide evidence** that the student, with or without reasonable accommodations, has sufficiently addressed the issues that previously established the criteria for a Health Leave. The Dean of Students may also ask, confer with, or seek information from others to assist in making the determination. The information sought may include:
  - a. Documentation by the student of their efforts to address the issues that led to the Health Leave

- b. Completion of Readiness to Return Provider Form, requested from all current treatment clinicians by the student and submitted to the Dean of Students
  - c. Documentation of additional evaluation by an independent and objective healthcare provider designated by Calvin
  - d. Release of academic records to inform treating clinicians, with appropriate authorization
  - e. Release of treatment information to the extent necessary to determine if the student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the need for a Health Leave, with appropriate authorization
  - f. Consultation with the Center for Counseling and Wellness and/or Health Services professionals to determine if the student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the need for a Health Leave, with appropriate authorization
  - g. Consultation with Disability Services
3. Following these consultations, a meeting with the student, and review of relevant documentation and information available, the Dean of Students will **make a decision** as to whether the student meets the essential eligibility requirements of the university, with or without reasonable accommodations. The decision will be made in a reasonably timely manner. In determining eligibility for return to campus, particular weight will be given to the student's completion of their Health Leave Plan (as outlined at the beginning of the Health Leave), medical information provided by the student's health care provider (including information from the Readiness to Return Provider Form), and completion of other requirements to return to Calvin University (such as resolving incomplete grades). Other factors for consideration may include treatment, education, work, and community service engaged in by the student during Health Leave.
4. The Dean of Students will **notify the student in writing** of the decision regarding return to the university, including the following information:
- a. basis for the decision
  - b. conditions and/or requirements under which the student is allowed to return to the university (if applicable)
  - c. information about the student's right to reasonable accommodations
  - d. contact information for the Center for Student Success and other applicable resource offices
  - e. information about the student's right to appeal (if applicable)
5. A student who has been notified of permission from the Dean of Students to return to the university will **apply for readmission through the Admissions Department**; the Dean of Students will notify Admissions Department and Registrar's Office staff of the student's clearance to return. A student not permitted to return **may appeal the decision** to the Vice President for Student Life, following procedure in Section III.C.

Depending on the student's individual circumstances, the student and the Dean of Students may work together to **develop a Health Support Plan**, with the involvement of a leave coordinator. Students returning from Health Leave are responsible for **reaching out to all applicable offices** and departments including their academic advisor, the Registrar, Disability Services, Financial Aid, Residence Life, and other student service offices related to their return.

## VI. Scope of the policy and relationship to other university policies

A leave of absence is an administrative process; it is not a disciplinary process. This policy and these procedures are not intended to be punitive and do not take the place of disciplinary actions that are in response to violations of Calvin's Student Conduct Code or other policies or directives, nor do they preclude the removal or dismissal of students from the university or university-related programs as a result of violations of either university policies or department protocols. This policy does not limit the university's ability to place enrollment holds on students for reasons beyond the scope of this policy and nothing in this policy relieves a student of any financial obligations to the university that were in place at the time the Health Leave began.

Nothing in this policy limits the power of the university to take administrative action to ensure the safety of the Calvin community. In situations involving an imminent or ongoing threat of harm to the student or any other member of the university community, the Dean of Students, in the exercise of their reasonable judgment, may require a student to be immediately prohibited from entering Calvin's campus or facilities utilized for university programs or activities while the individualized assessment and review for Involuntary Health Leave are taking place. Such students will receive the written notice described in Section III.B.2 as quickly as possible.

In exceptional circumstances, the President or the President's designee may summarily suspend, dismiss, or bar any person from the university or university-related programs, such as in cases where the following criteria are met:

1. the health or wellbeing of any person might be seriously affected; and/or
2. physical safety is seriously threatened; and/or
3. the ability of the university to carry out its essential operations is seriously threatened or impaired.

In such cases, actions taken will be reviewed promptly, typically within one week, by the appropriate university authority.

Last updated on 08/02/21