

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

Supporting Employees with Cancer

Many people with cancer desire a strong support system and a sense of normalcy while battling their disease. The workplace can be a great source of support for an employee with cancer, if employers take action to assist the employee during this hard time. Simple kindness is first and foremost, but these other actions may also be appreciated:

- Offer a private office for the sick employee so he or she can make and take calls from doctors. This will make getting test results easier, since conversations will not be overheard.
- Place a cot or couch in a private room so the employee can rest, if necessary. Make this room inviting and calm. Select a room that is out of the major flow of foot traffic, so there is less commotion.
- Respect your employee's wishes concerning discussions about the illness. While some employees will be eager to share details of their situation, others may view it as a private matter. If you are unclear about how much information the employee wants others to know, ask him or her directly to avoid over-sharing. Discuss your employee's wishes with other staffers. If the employee does not want to discuss the disease, then communicate that clearly to other employees.
- Provide an outlet for the sick employee if he or she would like to talk.
- Offer leave banks or pools for employees who have exhausted

their paid leave but need additional time off to deal with their illness. In both leave banks and pools, other employees can donate their accumulated paid leave. In leave banks, all employees can "deposit" their unused paid days into the bank for other employees to use. In leave pools, all employees can place unused paid days into the pool for a specific employee in need of additional time off. These systems allow other employees to help ill employees maintain their jobs and incomes during sickness and recovery.

Helping Employees Return to Work

After a medical leave of absence, no matter the duration, returning to work can be an adjustment. While some workers will be excited about diving back in to their regular routine, others will be apprehensive and nervous about what they missed while they were gone. To make this transition smoother, talk with the employee in advance to see how he or she is feeling. Determine what accommodations can be made and discuss these with him or her.

When preparing for an employee's return, ask the following questions:

- What does the company need to do ahead of time to make your transition back to work smoother?
- How can we accommodate your current medical needs?

If the employee needs an updated parking sticker or identification badge, provide these items before his or her return date.

Other things to remember:

- When he or she returns from medical leave, make sure other employees are welcoming.
- Focus on transitioning the employee back into a normal routine.
- Avoid alienating him or her from others with different treatment, or by acting as though he or she is unable to perform the tasks done in the past.
- Allow the employee to take breaks throughout the day.
- Check in with the employee after a week or so to make sure that his or her schedule and workload are manageable.

Did You Know...?

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