

Short Term Disability Guide

For Staff & Faculty

Getting Started

If you are absent from work because of an injury or illness and may not be returning within 10 work days, you should follow this checklist process for Lehigh's short term disability (STD) benefits.

- Prior to the start of your leave (at least 30 days in advance or as soon as practicable):
 - Contact Reliance Matrix, the University's STD administrator, by one of the following methods:
 - Phone: 877-202-0055
 - Online claim submission: www.matrixabsence.com
 - Mobile app: Matrix eServices Mobile
 - Contact Human Resources about the expected timing and length of the anticipated absence:
 - **Staff:** contact Kimberly Drey, kad610@lehigh.edu or 610-758-3895
 - **Faculty:** contact Caitlin Leidy, crl215@lehigh.edu or 610-758-3839
 - **Note regarding time recordkeeping for staff:** Human Resources will coordinate time reporting with the Payroll Office once your absence begins. You should not record your absence in TimeClock Plus.
 - Contact your supervisor and inform them of the expected timing and length of the anticipated absence
- Reliance Matrix will send a packet to you after you've contacted them to initiate a claim. This packet will contain important information and required forms.
 - Carefully review the packet.
 - Complete the **Authorization for Release of Medical Information** form and return it to Reliance Matrix per the instructions included in the packet.
 - Reliance Matrix will send a **Healthcare Provider Certification Form** to your designated provider. Follow up with your provider to ensure this form is completed by the deadline specified by Reliance Matrix.
 - Remember: you do not need to share your medical diagnosis with anyone other than Reliance Matrix.
- Follow up with Reliance Matrix periodically to ensure the team has received the required forms and information in order to complete the review of your claim.
 - If additional information is needed, respond to the request promptly.

During the Leave

- Reliance Matrix will send you confirmation when your claim is approved, or notification if your claim is denied or needs additional information.
 - The review of your claim will be completed within 3-5 business days as long as you and your provider have submitted all necessary forms and records for review.
- Notify Reliance Matrix immediately of any updated medical information that may impact or extend your claim period.

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- Contact Reliance Matrix as soon as you know that you may not be able to return by the claim end date. Additional medical information will need to be provided to Reliance Matrix for review.
- Stay in touch with your provider to ensure updated medical documentation is being submitted timely.
- Remain in contact with Human Resources and your supervisor to keep them informed of your latest anticipated return to work date.
 - Keep your supervisor updated of any changes in your length of absence.
- If you anticipate needing any work accommodations or an altered work schedule upon your return, notify Human Resources as soon as possible.
 - **Accommodations and restrictions must be reviewed PRIOR to your return to work.**
 - Contact Kelly Woodbridge at kmp415@lehigh.edu or 610-758-3698 with accommodations/restrictions questions.

Prior to Returning from Leave

- Submit a Healthcare Provider Release to Return to Work form at least 3 business days prior to your return (or as soon as practicable).
 - This form **MUST** be returned to Human Resources **PRIOR** to your return to work. **You will not be permitted to return to work without this completed document.**
 - Send a copy of the form to Reliance Matrix to confirm your claim may be closed.
 - If your healthcare provider indicates that you may return to work with no restrictions, contact your supervisor to discuss your return-to-work date.
 - If your healthcare provider indicates that you may return to work with restrictions, altered work schedules, etc. contact Human Resources as soon as possible to discuss potential accommodations.

Additional Information & Reminders

- Remember that initiating and maintaining your STD claim is your responsibility; failure to provide the necessary information to Reliance Matrix in a timely manner may result in suspension of pay.
- You cannot use sick time in place of STD time if your absence extends beyond 10 work days; if your absence cannot be medically substantiated via STD claim, you will be asked to submit medical certification for Family Medical Leave (FML). If FML is unavailable or your absence does not meet FML criteria, you must take the time either as unpaid leave or use vacation/floating holiday time.
- If your STD leave ends and you remain on leave, please contact Human Resources as soon as possible.
- Family Medical Leave (FML), if available, is applied concurrently to a short term disability absence.

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Frequently Asked Questions

When should I begin the process of initiating a claim for STD?

Initiate the claim as soon as you become aware you may need to use the benefit, or at least 30 days in advance of your anticipated absence.

Must I initiate a claim for STD if I will not be absent for 10 work days?

If your healthcare provider tells you that you probably won't miss more than a week of work time, just inform your supervisor of the logistics of your absence.

If your absence will extend beyond one week but not more than two weeks, contact Human Resources to discuss Family Medical Leave (FML) eligibility and paperwork.

How am I paid while on STD?

The University continues to manage your salary while on an approved STD claim. Your classification and years of service with the University determines the level of salary continuation you will receive. Contact Human Resources for more information.

It is imperative that you ensure the necessary information for your claim review and approval is provided to Reliance Matrix in a timely manner. Pay may be suspended without claim approval.

What information will Reliance Matrix need from me when I initiate my claim?

You will need to provide your name, last four digits of your SSN, address and phone number when initiating your claim. In addition, Reliance Matrix will ask for your healthcare provider's contact and fax information along with a description of your illness/injury, job title and brief description of your position duties.

What should I do in addition to speaking with Reliance Matrix, HR, and my supervisor? Is there anything I should tell my healthcare provider?

Tell your healthcare provider that Reliance Matrix will be sending them a certification form and request for medical information. Follow up with your provider to ensure this certification form is completed within the time period specified by Reliance Matrix.

You are also responsible for any fees charged by your provider(s) to release your medical records. Remember, under federal law, you are entitled to copies of your medical records from any healthcare provider or facility that treats you.

I won't be able to return to work by the specified end date of my STD claim. What should I do?

If your healthcare provider does not believe you may return to work by the end of your specified STD claim period, updated medical records will need to be submitted to Reliance Matrix as soon as possible so they may review your claim for an extension.

Contact Reliance Matrix immediately for next steps. Let Human Resources and your supervisor know that you will be initiating a claim extension with Reliance Matrix.

If you have reached the maximum benefit period for your STD claim, and are still unable to return to work, your claim will be reviewed for Long Term Disability (LTD) applicability. Human Resources will contact you to discuss the transition to LTD.



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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

I'm ready to return to work. What are my next steps?

Keep Human Resources and your supervisor informed of your anticipated return.

Have your healthcare provider complete a Healthcare Provider Release to Return to Work form (sent in your initial packet from Reliance Matrix, or you may contact Human Resources for a new copy if needed). Send the completed form to Human Resources and Reliance Matrix.

This form must be received by Human Resources PRIOR to your return, otherwise you will not be permitted to return to work.

If your healthcare provider determines you may return to work with no restrictions, notify your supervisor of your anticipated return.

If your healthcare provider determines you may return to work with restrictions and/or accommodations, contact Human Resources for next steps to facilitate your return.

Are there any other forms I should fill out with Human Resources?

If your leave is for the birth of a child, you may want to add them to your flexible benefits and/or request Paid Parental Leave (staff) or Family Medical Leave (faculty).

To add your child to your benefits, initiate a Qualifying Life Event request within 31 days following their birth. Instructions are available here: <https://hr.lehigh.edu/benefits/QLE>

To request Paid Parental Leave (**staff**), complete a Paid Parental Leave request form with Human Resources, available here: <https://hr.lehigh.edu/staff-paid-parental-leave-benefit>

To request Family Medical Leave (**faculty**), complete a Family Medical Leave Request for Birth/Placement of Child form, available here: <https://hr.lehigh.edu/hr-forms>