

Student Medical Withdrawal Process

November 6, 2019

Dartmouth College recognizes that students may experience health issues that significantly impact their ability to function successfully or safely at Dartmouth. In those situations, a medical withdrawal allows students to take a break from their studies so that they may receive treatment beyond what can typically be provided or accessed while actively enrolled. Students who wish to pursue a medical withdrawal may request a “voluntary medical withdrawal.” In some circumstances, Dartmouth may initiate a “mandatory medical withdrawal.” The reasons and procedures for both types of withdrawal are outlined below. Questions about this policy may be addressed to the appropriate undergraduate, graduate or professional school advising dean.¹

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1. Reason for the Policy

It is the goal of Dartmouth to foster an environment in which students are able to fully engage in their academic, residential, and/or campus life. If a health condition is interfering with a student’s ability to do so, or in the rare circumstance that the criteria for a mandatory medical withdrawal are met (see section 2(b)(i)), the student may seek reinstatement at a later date in accordance with the terms of sections 3 and 4 of this policy.

¹ For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise specified an “advising dean” is the Dartmouth professional staff member who supports students in their engagement with the curriculum and in their overall educational experience at Dartmouth. A Dean is available to discuss academic advising and personal issues with a student. For undergraduate students enrolled in the College, for example, a student’s assigned Undergraduate Dean serves this role.

In unusual circumstances, a health condition may cause Dartmouth to withdraw a student from the academic community. Students will have an opportunity to take a voluntary medical withdrawal before a decision is made with respect to a mandatory medical withdrawal.

Consistent with Dartmouth's Nondiscrimination Policy, Dartmouth prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of any type of disability or any other characteristic protected by applicable law in the administration of Dartmouth's programs or activities. The options available under this policy help students receive the individualized assessment, administrative consideration, and support services needed to address health issues that arise or escalate during their time on campus and significantly interfere with their ability to engage in academic, residential and/or campus life. This policy outlines a flexible and individualized process that students should follow to request a medical withdrawal.

2. Medical Withdrawal Process

The information below outlines the process for requesting, implementing and returning from voluntary and mandatory medical withdrawals.

a. Voluntary Medical Withdrawal

i. Applying for a Voluntary Medical Withdrawal

Students who feel they would benefit from a medical withdrawal should meet with their advising dean and an appropriate provider at Dartmouth College Health Service ("DCHS") (Primary Care or Counseling Center) as soon as possible to discuss options. Support from a DCHS provider, following an individualized assessment, is necessary to obtain a voluntary medical withdrawal.

The assessment process, which may occur during a single session or over a few sessions, informs the clinician's determination as to whether a student's physical or psychological condition meets the criteria for a medical withdrawal. Students already receiving care at DCHS should ask their current provider to explore this option with them. All students should note that DCHS providers will not make medical withdrawal recommendations retroactively (that is, for a term prior to the current one).

Students can contact and schedule an appointment at DCHS for the purpose of pursuing a medical withdrawal by calling Primary Care (646-9401) or Counseling (646-9442). Before requesting a medical withdrawal or other change in enrollment, international students should also consult with the Office of Visa and Immigration Services about the implications of inactive student status. If supported, requests to withdraw are processed by the appropriate undergraduate, graduate or professional school dean's office.

ii. Evaluation of Applications for Voluntary Medical Withdrawal

The decision to grant or deny a request for a voluntary medical withdrawal is made by the responsible dean's office after DCHS meets with the student to conduct an individualized assessment, reviews other relevant documentation, and determines eligibility for a voluntary medical withdrawal. A voluntary medical withdrawal will be granted when it is determined that a health condition significantly interferes with the student's ability to participate in academic, residential, and/or campus life, including the inability to complete or make satisfactory progress toward academic requirements.

Information from, but not limited to, the following sources can be incorporated into the process, as applicable: information from a student's personal health care provider(s), deans, academic and administrative departments, faculty, and Student Accessibility Services. Students are not asked to disclose detailed information about their health to anyone other than the health care professionals at DCHS. It is the policy of the DCHS to keep medical and counseling information confidential. While the DCHS health care professional will convey a determination as to whether the student meets the criteria for a medical leave with the student's consent, specific details would not be shared without a release.

A student who requests a voluntary medical withdrawal will be notified of Dartmouth's decision regarding the request by the student's dean.

iii. Appeal of Decisions

An appeal of a decision to deny a voluntary leave request will be considered only if substantial new information, not reasonably available at the time of the decision, has become available after the decision has been made. A request for reconsideration along with the new information should be submitted within three business days of the decision to DCHS and the appropriate dean for the undergraduate, graduate or professional school student. Late requests for reconsideration will be considered only if the dean determines that exceptional circumstances caused the delay. If the basis for the request for reconsideration is new medical information, the dean will reconsider the decision in consultation with DCHS. If a student is enrolled in more than one school at Dartmouth, then the appropriate deans of those schools shall reach a joint decision in consultation with DCHS. If the appropriate deans of the schools are unable to agree, the Provost or their designee shall make the final determination.

b. Mandatory Medical Withdrawal

On occasion, students may experience health conditions that cannot be addressed through the provision of reasonable accommodations and that require a level of care that exceeds what Dartmouth can appropriately provide. In situations that meet the criteria below, and in which a student has not chosen to take a voluntary medical withdrawal, the appropriate senior dean for the undergraduate, graduate, or professional school student (*i.e.*, the Dean of the College, the Deans of the Geisel, Guarini, Thayer and Tuck Schools), or their designee, may implement a mandatory medical withdrawal following an individualized assessment. If a student is enrolled in more than one school, then the appropriate deans of those schools shall reach a joint decision. If they are unable to reach a joint decision, the Provost or their designee will make the final determination.

i. Criteria

Before placing any student on a mandatory medical withdrawal, an appropriate DCHS provider (Primary Care or Counseling) will do an individualized assessment, consulting with Student Accessibility Services, to determine if there are reasonable accommodations that would permit the student to continue as an active student. Dartmouth will implement a mandatory medical withdrawal if the appropriate dean (see above) determines, after consultation with DCHS, that (A) the student has declined or neglected to withdraw voluntarily after being offered the opportunity to do so, (B) the student has a health condition, and (C):

- the student is unable or unwilling to carry out substantial self-care obligations and/or
- current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence indicates that the student poses a significant risk to the health or safety of others; and/or
- current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence indicates that the student's health or safety is at significant risk (and such conclusion is not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations about individuals with disabilities); and/or
- the student substantially impedes the lawful activities of other members of the Dartmouth community, or the educational processes, activities or functions of the Dartmouth community.

The determination that a student meets the standards set forth above will be based on an individualized assessment of the student, including determining whether reasonable accommodations could permit the student to continue to participate in the Dartmouth community.

ii. Process

The following process will be used to determine if the criteria for a mandatory medical withdrawal have been met:

1. The dean or their designee will notify the student in writing that a mandatory medical withdrawal is under consideration, the reason(s) why it is under consideration, the standards to be used to make that decision (as described in this policy), and the process (as described in this policy), including the right to appeal a decision. At the time of that notification, the dean may communicate in writing to the student that they may not remain on campus and/or may not continue to participate in Dartmouth-related activities pending the dean's determination whether to implement a mandatory medical withdrawal. If a student is instructed to leave campus, the dean will determine the extent to which it is reasonable for the student to continue their academic work remotely while this process is pending.
2. The dean will refer the student for an evaluation by a licensed health care provider.
 - A. This evaluation may be completed by either a DCHS clinician or a community provider licensed in the appropriate field of practice. The student must sign appropriate releases giving DCHS and the College permission to provide any relevant information for the evaluation from the student's health care and/or administrative records to the community provider. The student must also sign a release permitting the community provider to provide DCHS information from the evaluation. Dartmouth will require a student to provide a release only for access to records that are reasonably necessary to complete the individualized assessment.
 - B. The medical evaluation must be begun and completed within the reasonable timetable established by the dean and must be made available to DCHS. The medical evaluation shall include an individualized assessment based on reasonable medical judgment relying on current medical knowledge and the best objective information regarding the duration and severity of the risk, the probability that the criteria set forth above in section 2(b)(i). have been met, and the likelihood that alternatives to a mandatory medical withdrawal will not sufficiently mitigate that risk. The individualized assessment will include consideration of relevant information timely provided to the medical professional conducting the assessment.
3. At the discretion of the dean, any pending disciplinary action based on the student's underlying behavior may be placed on hold until the evaluation is completed.

4. If a mandatory medical withdrawal is recommended by DCHS, the student shall then be given an opportunity to submit any information that is reasonably related to the withdrawal under consideration. The dean will make the final decision regarding withdrawal, with due consideration given to all relevant information received, including the recommendation of DCHS, information the student submits, and the individualized assessments submitted by the student's healthcare providers.

If a mandatory medical withdrawal is implemented, students are required to leave campus immediately unless otherwise informed by the dean. A student subject to a mandatory medical withdrawal will receive a letter from DCHS providing treatment recommendations for the student's time away from Dartmouth. DCHS' assessment of the student's readiness to return will include review of information from the student's providers during the period of withdrawal, which will focus on improvement of the clinical condition and readiness to return. As set forth below, the final decision on returning to Dartmouth rests with the dean (or their designee).

In lieu of a mandatory medical withdrawal, a student may choose to withdraw voluntarily at any time. In addition, a mandatory medical withdrawal is not a disciplinary action. However, separate disciplinary action may result from the underlying behavior of a student who experiences a mandatory medical withdrawal, pursuant to the applicable Dartmouth student handbook.

iii. Appeal of Decisions

Within three business days of the decision, a student who is placed on mandatory medical withdrawal may submit a written request for review to the appropriate undergraduate, graduate or professional school dean (*i.e.*, Dean of the College, or the Deans of the Geisel, Guarini, Thayer and Tuck Schools) or their designee. The request must include detailed support for the request to overturn or modify the decision; it must specify the substantive or procedural basis for the appeal, and must be made on grounds other than general dissatisfaction with the decision of the dean. Late requests for reconsideration will be considered only if the dean determines that exceptional circumstances caused the delay. If a student is instructed to leave campus, the dean will determine the extent to which it is reasonable for the student to continue their academic work remotely while this process is pending.

In determining whether to grant the request, the dean may choose to meet with the student and/or consult with providers or other relevant sources as the dean deems appropriate. The mandatory medical withdrawal will remain in effect while the request for review is pending. The decision of the dean will be final. If the student is enrolled in more than one school at Dartmouth, the relevant deans will reach a joint decision. If they are unable to do so, the final determination will be made by the Provost or their designee.

3. Length of Withdrawal / Activities

This section applies to both voluntary and mandatory medical withdrawals.

Students must leave campus immediately after a medical withdrawal has been approved or implemented, unless otherwise informed by the appropriate dean. Withdrawn students may not return to campus or participate in any campus or Dartmouth-related activities prior to being reinstated. Because every student's situation is different, the length of the medical withdrawal will be determined individually. Factors DCHS will consider in determining the student's medical readiness to return will include the nature and severity of the student's medical condition, progress in treatment and recovery, and the support of the student's treating providers. Students on a voluntary or mandatory medical withdrawal must obtain prior permission from the appropriate dean to return to campus before formal reinstatement (see section 4).

A medical withdrawal allows students to take a break from their studies so that they may receive treatment beyond what can typically be provided or accessed while actively enrolled. The goal of a medical withdrawal, whether voluntary or mandatory, is to help students prepare to return to active status. Students should take the time necessary to achieve this goal. It is recommended that the withdrawal be long enough to allow students to regain the level of wellness required to manage the academic and community obligations of the school in which they are enrolled.

Students are expected to receive clinically appropriate medical treatment as outlined by the DCHS clinician at the time of the withdrawal. DCHS' assessment of the student's readiness to return will include review of information from the student's providers during the period of withdrawal, which will focus on improvement of the clinical condition and readiness to return. As part of the routine reinstatement process, the appropriate deans' office may also expect students to engage in sustained productive activities, which might include employment, volunteer work, creative or athletic pursuits, credit-bearing work elsewhere that has been pre-approved by the appropriate Dartmouth Registrar, non-credit educational activities, fulfillment of family obligations, or other appropriate pursuits – provided that such activities do not detract from the main goal: regaining their health.

4. Process for Return

A student who is on a medical withdrawal (whether voluntary or mandatory) and believes they are prepared to return must provide appropriate documentation to begin the reinstatement process. Requests for reinstatement following withdrawal must be submitted by the appropriate deadline for the school in which they seek to re-enroll. For undergraduate students, the deadline for requesting reinstatement from the Undergraduate Deans Office is no later than 60 calendar days in advance of the term in which the student seeks to re-enroll. **All documentation required by DCHS must be submitted to DCHS two weeks prior to the applicable school reinstatement request deadline.**

The supporting documentation required will be informed by the circumstances of the withdrawal. After a student has expressed an intent to return in writing following the applicable school's reinstatement process, the appropriate dean will confirm the individualized documentation that will be required to confirm the student's readiness to resume studies, and the deadlines by which that documentation must be submitted in order for the student to be considered for reinstatement for the beginning of the next academic term.

Both the health of the student and the student's demonstrated ability to resume participation in all aspects of undergraduate, graduate or professional school academic and campus life are central to the determination of whether the request to return will be granted (with or without reasonable accommodations). Clinical improvement of symptoms and the support of the student's treatment providers will weigh heavily in the consideration of a student's request to return. The appropriate dean will determine whether to grant a student's request to return following an evaluation of all relevant documentation. Every effort will be made to respond to a student's request for return within 10 business days after submission of all the required materials.

Once a student's request to return is granted, a dean will contact the student to request a check-in visit. Students with disabilities are eligible for reasonable accommodations and/or special services in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students are responsible for communicating their requests for accommodations to Student Accessibility Services or the relevant official within their graduate or professional school. Detailed information on the process for requesting undergraduate accommodations may be found on the Student Accessibility Services website.

If DCHS expresses concern about the student's readiness to return, and upon review, the appropriate dean determines that a student is not ready to return, the student will be advised in writing. A student may appeal the determination by submitting an appeal letter in writing, with relevant supporting information, to the Dean of the College or the dean of the appropriate graduate or professional school, within 3 business days after receiving written notice of the decision. The dean of the school in which the student is enrolled will review the student's submission and determine whether the student will be reinstated. If a

student is enrolled in more than one school at Dartmouth, then the heads of those schools shall reach a decision together. If the relevant heads of the schools are unable to come to a decision, the Provost or their designee shall make the final determination.

5. Other Dartmouth Resources

Financial implications: Students are strongly encouraged to contact their Dean and the Financial Aid Office to determine the possible financial implications of taking a medical withdrawal.

International students: International students are strongly encouraged to contact their Dean and the Office of Visa and Immigration Services (603-646-3474) to determine the impact of a medical withdrawal on their visa status.

Health insurance: Students considering a medical withdrawal are strongly encouraged to review their health insurance coverage. Students enrolled in Dartmouth's Student Group Health Plan (DSGHP) are automatically covered for the remainder of the plan year; they also may be eligible to purchase a one-time, one-year extension of DSGHP insurance. The Dartmouth Student Group Health Plan office (603-646-9438) can provide detailed guidance. Students with other health insurance plans should contact their plan provider to clarify coverage. (Typically, an insurance card has a phone number on the back where students can direct their inquiries.)

Students with questions or concerns related to other aspects of their Dartmouth experience should contact the appropriate office:

- **Housing:** The Undergraduate On-campus Housing Office can be reached at 603-646-3093.
- **Meal plan:** The Dartmouth Dining service can be reached at Dartmouth.Dining.Service@Dartmouth.edu.
- **Accommodations:** Student Accessibility Services can be reached at 603-646-9900.
 - **Academic status:** To verify a student's status as either enrolled or withdrawn, the appropriate Registrar can be reached at:
 - Undergraduates: 603-646-2246
 - Geisel: 603-650-2248
 - Guarini: 603-646-2107
 - Thayer: 603-646-3801
 - Tuck: 603-646-9305

6. Scope of this Policy

Nothing in this policy limits the power of Dartmouth College to take administrative action to ensure the safety of the Dartmouth community.