**Sick Leave Policy**

**Introduction**

The objective of this policy is to ensure that the management of Sick Leave absence is consistent for all employees at the Ministry for Health, Elderly and Community Care. It also recognizes that unduly high levels of sick leave will adversely affect the efficiency and level of care.

Although it is the Ministry’s policy to deal with the problem of ill health in a supportive manner, it is to be noted that abuse of Sick Leave is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

**Sick Leave Entitlement**

In accordance with the Public Service Management Code (PSMC) Para 4.3.5, all employees are entitled to Sick Leave as follows:

- Full-time employees including employees on reduced hours: 30 days on full-pay and 30 days on half-pay.
- Part-time employees: On a pro-rata basis according to hours worked.
- New recruits: 15 working days on full-pay during the first 6 months and the remaining balance from 30 working days thereafter.
- Temporary employees: 30 days on full-pay and 30 days on half-pay.

Employees who were already pensionable prior to 15 January 1979 are entitled to sick leave on full pay for a period not exceeding 6 months in the aggregate during any period of 12 months as per PSMC 4.3.4

**Notification and Certification**

An employee who falls sick and is unable to attend for work must immediately notify his/her Manager/Section Head. This should be not later than the normal time of commencement of work.

**When communicating with the head of section, the employee should give the details of the residence where s/he will be staying during the sick leave including the address in addition to a landline and/or mobile telephone number.** The contact number given will be forwarded to the medical practitioner assigned with the sick leave verification, who may in
turn try to contact the employee concerned if nobody answers the door.

Employees working on a night shift should inform their Manager/Section Head not later than 4 hours ahead of commencement of the shift. This is essential to enable alternative arrangements to be made to cover vital services.

A Medical Certificate (NI 16) is to be requested from the medical practitioner on the first day of sickness. The original copy should be immediately sent by the employee to the Department of Social Security in Valletta or to the nearest District Office. If the certificate states a period of recovery of 6 days or less, the copy of the original should be endorsed by the employee’s immediate superior and then handed personally to the Leave/Payroll Section on the day the employee resumes duty. Mater Dei employees should present the Employee’s Sick Leave Card together with the Medical Certificate. If the Sick Leave Certificate does not reach the Leave/Payroll Section within 5 days that the employees resumes duty, the period of Sick Leave will be considered as absent and the employee will be liable to Disciplinary Action.

If the Medical Certificate is left open due to prolonged recovery from sickness, the copy of the original should be sent by mail to the Leave/Payroll Section. An Intermediate Medical Certificate should be sent on a weekly basis until the employee resumes duty. As stated above, the original should be immediately sent to the Social Security Department. The copy of the Final Certificate is to be handed over the Leave/Payroll Section on the day the employee resumes duty.

Under no circumstance shall the original Sick Leave Certificate be sent to the Department of Social Security by the Leave/Payroll Section but must be posted personally by the employee.

Verification of Sick Leave

The Ministry reserves the right to verify the use of Sick Leave by all employees. For this reason a private company has been appointed to carry out this verification.

Managers/Section Heads are to forward information regarding all employees under their charge who have reported sick to their respective Human Resources section on a daily basis by not later than 9am on the Form at Appendix 1 which must include address and contact number. In the case of Mater Dei Hospital, Managers/Section Heads are to inform the Discipline Section on disc.mdh@gov.mt. This information should be derived from the employee when reporting sick. On weekends and Public Holidays, Managers/Section Heads are to send an e-mail directly to the company (details may be obtained from the Discipline Section in the case of Mater Dei Hospital) specifying only those employees whose sick leave they wish to verify. A list with the details of employees whose sickness was verified on weekends and Public Holidays should be sent to the Human Resources Section/Discipline Section by the next working day.

A list with the details of employees who have reported sick for their night shift must also be forwarded to Human Resources Section/Discipline Section, since verification of Sick Leave may be done during the rest day.
While on Sick Leave, employees are expected to remain indoors unless the department is notified in advance by a medical certificate. Verification of Sick Leave may also be carried out on off-duty days or weekends that fall within the Sick Leave period.

Employees who need to visit their family doctor in a private clinic or hospital are to inform their superior officer beforehand, giving details of the time they leave home and the expected time of return. The family doctor must issue a note affirming the time the employee was at the clinic/hospital.

All employees who are not at home during verification of Sick Leave, or who are in any way found to be abusing, are liable to disciplinary action. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that there is accessibility for the company doctor and that the door bell is in good working order.

Medical Boards

In cases of prolonged or excessive Sick Leave an employee may be referred by the Ministry to a Medical Board which is appointed by the Department of Health.

An employee who is granted Sick Leave on the recommendation of a Medical Board will not be permitted to return to work before he/she is re-examined by the Medical Board.

Employees may be required or permitted to retire on satisfactory medical evidence that they are incapable of discharging their duties.

Accumulation of Sick Leave

A non-pensionable employee may be granted to avail him/herself of half the unused Sick Leave in the previous 4 years following exhaustion of the sick leave entitlement of the current year and only in the following circumstances as per MPO Circular 12/99:

- All cases of malignant tumors
- All cases referred for medical treatment overseas
- Post major abdominal surgery*
- Acute hepatitis
- Chronic pancreatitis*
- Advanced chronic active hepatitis
- Advanced hepatic cirrhosis
- Myocardial infarction
- Severe, unstable angina
- Post open heart surgery
- Congestive heart failure
- Cerebrovascular accident
- Severe head injury*
Intracranial surgery
Psychotic illness
Fractures disabling to the individual
Severe inflammatory arthritis*
Chronic renal failure*
Chronic obstructive airways disease*
Surgical intervention of the spine.
Hospitalisation

The conditions marked with an asterisk can only be considered following a confidential report from the consultant in charge of the case. In addition extension of sick leave is to be given to those individuals who are forced to stay off work on public health grounds.

Previously approved Vacation Leave that immediately follows a period of Sick Leave can only be availed of after confirmation of approval by the Head of Section/Manager.

Conclusion

This policy sets out guidelines which are there to help deal with sickness absence issues. Whilst acknowledging the fact that a supportive attitude should be taken with employees who are suffering from ill-health, measures must be taken to ensure that no abuse occurs in order for the Department to offer the best-possible service to its patients.

Reference: Public Service Management Code Chapter 4.
MPO Circular No 84/2008
# SICKNESS VERIFICATION FORM

Department/Hospital:                                                                                                                  Date:

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Reporting Officer: