



University of New Mexico Staff Council 2024

Name: Addition of Mental and Emotional Wellbeing to Policy 3410 Sick Leave

Authors: Sierra Cushing Grade 13, Christine F Heinemeyer IT Support Tech 3, Marvin Gouch Precinct 25, Deena Duran Senior Business Analyst, Jessica Serna Grade 13, Vanessa Roybal Chair of HSC Staff Committee.

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- 1) WHEREAS the University of New Mexico’s 2040 Strategic Planning Framework Goal Three includes an objective to focus on staff and faculty recruitment and retention ⁱ; and
- 2) WHEREAS work can either protect from, or contribute to, worsening mental health ⁱⁱ; and
- 3) WHEREAS “Individuals with mental illness experience disparities in health care, education, and employment outcomes, and the stigma associated with mental illness is a central contributing factor to these disparities.” ⁱⁱⁱ; and
- 4) WHEREAS mental health days allow employees to take off work and other responsibilities to prioritize self-care, rest, and recovery; and
- 5) WHEREAS “stepping away from responsibilities and stress for a short time can help refocus and recharge the brain and body.” ^{iv} and allows employees to be “more productive upon their return than if they’d continued to work with little to no motivation” ^v; and
- 6) WHEREAS “For people with a mental health diagnosis, like anxiety or depression, a mental health day can prevent crisis situations, like a major depressive episode or panic attack.” ^{iv}; and
- 7) WHEREAS for those with and without a mental health diagnosis, taking mental health days can reduce feelings of burnout, improve morale and attitude, improve resiliency, reduce isolation and loneliness, increase productivity, reduce presenteeism and long-term absenteeism, and improve physical health ^{iv}; and
- 8) WHEREAS in 2021, 76% of respondents to a survey reported experiencing at least one symptom of a mental health condition in the prior year and 84% of respondents reported at least one workplace factor that negatively impacted their mental health. In the same survey, 50% of respondents reported leaving previous roles due to, in part, mental health reasons ^{vi}; and
- 9) WHEREAS mental health is too often misunderstood and deprioritized compared with physical health; and
- 10) WHEREAS individuals may not seek a diagnosis or publicly acknowledge a diagnosis for fear of stigma ⁱⁱⁱ; and
- 11) WHEREAS appropriate policy interventions can reduce stigma ^{vii}; and

- 12) WHEREAS The University of New Mexico is the flagship University and one of the largest employers in New Mexico, our example has the potential to create a meaningful impact across the state benefiting our employees and community, as well as being a role model for other organizations; and
- 13) WHEREAS several other universities have added a mental health component to their leave policies including, but not limited to: University of Kansas, University of Maryland, University of Minnesota, University of Pennsylvania, University of Texas-Austin, University of Washington, and St. John University; and
- 14) WHEREAS there is inconsistency in supervisors allowing sick leave to be used for mental health or emotionally wellness since the policy language is restrictive to "...personal illness, injury, or medical treatment (including pregnancy and childbirth), prescheduled doctor and dentist appointments, and other related medical conditions may be charged to sick leave as provided for in Section 6. Absence from work to care for an ill or injured member of one's immediate family may also be charged to sick leave as provided for in Section 6." ^{viii}
- 15) RESOLVED, Staff Council requests Policy #3410 Section 3.9 be amended to:
Time off due to personal illness, injury, **mental and emotional wellbeing**, or medical treatment (including pregnancy and childbirth), prescheduled doctor and dentist appointments, and other related medical conditions may be charged to sick leave as provided for in Section 6. Absence from work to care for an ill or injured member of one's immediate family may also be charged to sick leave as provided for in Section 6. Family members may be natural, step, adopted, or foster, and immediate family, for purposes of this policy, is defined as the employee's spouse or domestic partner, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings, niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, or is living in the household of an eligible employee. Proof of relationship or residency in household may be required. Persons affected by pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions must be treated the same as persons affected by other medical conditions.

Copies of this Resolution shall be sent to the UNM Board of Regents; Dr. Garnett Stokes, President; Teresa Costantinidis, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration; Dr. James Holloway, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Douglas Ziedonis, Executive Vice President for HSC and CEO of the UNM Health System; Dr. Assata Zerai, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion; Cinnamon Blair, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer; Kevin Stevenson, Vice President for Human Resources; Heather Jaramillo, Director of Equal Opportunity & ADA Coordinator; Dr. Valerie Romero-Leggott, Vice President and Executive Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, HSC; Sidney Mason-Coon, University Policy Officer; and The Daily Lobo.

i https://opportunity.unm.edu/assets/docs/unm2040_strategic_framework_5_2022.pdf

ii <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/promotion-prevention/mental-health-in-the-workplace>

- iii <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3698840/>
- iv <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/recharge-with-planned-mental-health-day#:~:text=Dedicating%20time%20and%20focusing%20on,help%20lessen%20feelings%20of%20burnout.&text=mental%20health%20day%20can%20help,on%20things%20that%20bring%20joy.>
- v <https://www.wellmark.com/blue-at-work/healthy-employees/provide-mental-health-days>
- vi <https://www.mindsharepartners.org/mentalhealthatworkreport-2021>
- vii <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732214548862>
- viii <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/3000/3410.html>