

# **Medical and Mental Health Emergencies and Withdrawals**

## **Introduction**

Lipscomb University cares deeply about the physical and mental health of its students. Therefore, health and counseling services are available on campus. At times however, a student may experience such extreme medical or psychological conditions that the ability to function successfully or safely in the role of a student is significantly impaired. Students are encouraged to prioritize their health and safety and take steps toward recovery, even if academic progress must be delayed. The University will support student-initiated self-care plans, and/or initiate actions, that consider the welfare of the individual student and the University community.

## **Behavioral Intervention Team**

The Senior Vice President of Student Life has appointed a Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) to meet regularly to address student needs. One of the goals of the team is to provide a safety net for students to ensure their academic and interpersonal success. Anyone in the Lipscomb community may identify students to this team who may be experiencing problems or encountering obstacles, setbacks or challenges to their success and retention at Lipscomb. Sometimes there is a crisis or a situation discovered by concerned others and brought to the attention of the University. In such circumstances, the dean of student life, in consultation with the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT), will determine what, if any, role the University may need to take to assure the health and safety of a student or the University community.

The BIT is chaired by the dean of student life. Members include representatives from the faculty, safety, counseling center, disability services, risk management, Lipscomb Academy, registrar, and residence life. Depending on the emergency or concern, the chair may include other members on the team.

Student situations that might be considered by the BIT include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Acute decline in physical health;
- Suicidal threat, intent and/or behavior; self-injurious behavior;
- Destructive, threatening, or other disruptive behavior;
- Drug and alcohol abuse, including overdose or misuse of over-the-counter or prescription medications;
- Eating disorders which are not responding to treatment and/or are posing safety concerns;
- Any physical or mental health problem that points to possible imminent or foreseeable danger to oneself or another member of the University community, or requires intensive monitoring to prevent such danger.

In responding to these situations, the BIT reserves the right to determine appropriate response including, but not limited to, the following options:

1. Allow the student to remain in school, but require a specific mental health or physical health evaluation, within a certain period of time (typically 10 days). The student may be

referred to the Health Center, Counseling Center and/or off-campus options (e.g., licensed mental health or physical health care providers, eating disorder or substance abuse programs/hospitals). The student will be responsible for any cost incurred by the evaluation and/or treatment. In the interest of gaining a better understanding of the student's ability to function in the University community, the University may require the student to sign appropriate release forms allowing designated Lipscomb staff to consult with the evaluating and/or treating clinician(s) serving the student. Based on the evaluation results, the BIT will determine appropriate next steps, including the possibility of allowing the student to remain on campus if a commitment is made to the recommended treatment plan.

2. Invoke a Medical Interim Restriction; encourage a Voluntary Medical Withdrawal; or invoke an Involuntary Medical Withdrawal (see below).
3. Notify the student's parent(s) and appropriate University officials (e.g., the student's professors, Registrar's Office) about a mental or physical health or safety emergency. Note: University notifications will respect confidentiality, and will share limited information on a need-to-know basis only. All requirements and conditions determined by the BIT will be outlined in writing in a letter from the chair, delivered, mailed, or emailed to the student.

## **Procedures**

### **Medical Interim Restriction**

The BIT may invoke a medical interim restriction upon a student's medical or psychological hospitalization, emergency, or during a medical evaluation period. Students who are medically restricted for any health reason are temporarily not allowed to participate in any University activities, attend classes, reside in or visit on-campus student housing, and may not be on campus except to attend a meeting or hearing related to his/her case. This interim period allows time for a student to receive the needed medical and/or psychological care, and for all parties to consider an evaluation of readiness to return to the University. The student must follow the clearance procedures listed below before returning. Students who are medically restricted will be notified by email or in writing and will have the opportunity to address the basis for the decision by contacting the dean of student life.

### **Voluntary Medical Withdrawal**

Students are encouraged to request a voluntary medical withdrawal when they believe their physical or mental health problems are preventing successful engagement in, and completion of, academic course work; when safety is in question; or when the demands of university life are interfering with the ability to recover from, or adjust to a significant physical or mental health challenge.

Students interested in pursuing a voluntary medical withdrawal may wish to discuss this option with providers at the Health Center or the Counseling Center, or they may independently initiate the process through the registrar's office. After the voluntary withdrawal is approved, the person

is no longer considered a student and must immediately leave campus and, if applicable, officially check out of on-campus housing.

### **Involuntary Medical Withdrawal**

In rare circumstances, the BIT may determine that a student must be involuntarily medically withdrawn. Those who are medically withdrawn for any health reason are not allowed to participate in any University activities, attend classes, reside in or visit on-campus student housing, and may not be on campus except to attend a meeting or hearing related to his/her case. Examples of situations that might result in an involuntary medical withdrawal include the following:

- Professional evaluations following a medical interim suspension do not support a student's readiness to return;
- A student fails to complete the required assessment during a medical interim suspension;
- A known condition has deteriorated (e.g., a student with an eating disorder), rendering the student to be in possible imminent danger and/or incapable of functioning as a student.

In most cases, these situations can be handled through voluntary medical withdrawals; however, if the student is unwilling to pursue a voluntary withdrawal, the BIT may invoke its right to involuntarily withdraw a student. The BIT will recommend assessment and/or treatment conditions needed to return to Lipscomb. The student must follow the clearance procedures listed below.

If a student believes that a decision for an involuntary medical withdrawal made by the BIT is unreasonable or that the procedures used were unfair, the student may appeal. The appeal must be made in writing to the senior vice president of student life and to the dean of student life. Appeals should clarify what facts the student believes were not considered, or explain what procedures were unreasonable or unfair. Once notified of the involuntary medical withdrawal, the student has three business days to submit his/her appeal. The senior vice president (or designee) will respond by email or in writing to the student's appeal within three days. The response will clarify whether the vice president concludes that all relevant facts were considered and led to fair and reasonable conclusions. The senior vice president's (or designee's) decision is final.

### **Clearance Procedures**

Any student who has been placed on a medical interim restriction or an involuntary medical withdrawal will need to complete the following clearance procedures before being allowed to return to the University. The BIT may also require a student who takes a voluntary medical withdrawal to complete the clearance procedures. The following steps are designed to ensure that a health emergency no longer exists and a treatment plan for continuing good health and safety is in place. Note: Depending on the situation, students may complete these procedures on different timelines. Some students may complete these steps within days of the medical interim

suspension notice or medical withdrawal while others may wait several months before pursuing a return to the University.

1. The student must be assessed by an appropriate outside professional, whose opinions will be advisory to the University. The professional, who is selected by the student, must be a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist if evaluating mental health concerns, and must be a licensed physician if the evaluation is regarding other medical concerns. Further, all providers must be unrelated to the student and must have specialty/credentials appropriate for the condition of concern (e.g., an eating disorder or substance abuse specialist). To make an accurate assessment, before conducting the evaluation the provider must be given information related to the precipitating events that led to the leave. This typically would involve the student signing a release allowing the University (e.g., the Health Center, Counseling Center, senior vice president of student life, and dean of student life) to share information regarding relevant incidents or concerns, and if applicable, recent hospital records. The student will be responsible for any cost incurred by the evaluation. The student shall sign a release permitting two-way communication between the provider and the University BIT representatives, and allowing all relevant information to be provided to the University BIT representatives who are involved in the decision-making and review process.
2. The outside mental health or medical professional must provide an assessment of current functioning of the student and provide written recommendations regarding: a) given the precipitating events, the student's readiness to return to the academic and co-curricular demands of university life; b) the student's readiness to live in the on-campus residential community; c) ongoing treatment or testing needs; d) any conditions or restrictions that the University should impose; and e) the student's readiness to return to competitive sports, if the student is a collegiate athlete. Note: The University team physician, in consultation with the Lipscomb director of the Health Center and/or Counseling Center, will ultimately make the decision regarding athletic involvement but will consider this outside evaluation in making such a determination. NOTE: Documentation of the assessment (conducted within 30 days of application for re-entry) and documentation of required treatment completion must be provided to the Office of the Dean of Student Life no later than December 1 for the spring semester and July 1 for the fall semester. Those planning to return to a summer session must provide documentation no later than 30 days before the summer session begins.
3. After the evaluation results and treatment documentation have been provided, the student must meet with a BIT representative (the Chair and typically the director of the Counseling Center or Health Center). The evaluation and the student's own perception regarding readiness to return, needs, and plans for treatment will be discussed. Additionally, the representative will consider how the outside evaluator's recommendations fit with the realities of student life at Lipscomb and services that are available on campus or in the community.
4. The BIT will meet and consider the outside evaluator's recommendation and the results of the student's meeting with the BIT representative to inform its re-entry decision. Students will receive email or written notification of the BIT's decision.

*Notes:*

- There may be occasions in which the BIT requires, and may pay for, an additional evaluation.
- The BIT reserves the right to require the student to comply with a treatment plan recommended by the outside and/or Lipscomb healthcare/mental health professional as a condition of returning to, or remaining in, the campus community. Review and monitoring of the student's required treatment plan may be assigned to a University designee assigned by the BIT. Failure to comply with requirements may result in the University issuing an involuntary medical withdrawal.
- If a student was living on-campus prior to the emergency, approval for return to the University usually includes approval to return to housing. However, a student's on-campus housing status may be restricted if the student's behavior poses a health or safety threat to him/herself or others.
- If a student was required to complete specific treatment (e.g, eating disorder or substance abuse treatment), the student must provide documentation regarding the completion of this requirement.

## **Additional Considerations**

### **Academic Credit, Tuition and Housing**

For all approved medical withdrawals, the student receives Ws on the academic transcript (or, if the withdrawal occurs during the add/drop period, is completely dropped from classes, without any notation on the transcript of having left for medical reasons).

### **FERPA and HIPAA**

All provisions are subject to the terms of FERPA and HIPAA, and the procedures will be modified or adjusted as necessary to ensure compliance with those statutes and the related regulations.