

EMPLOYEE HESITANCY TO RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE

Guidance for supervisors, managers, and local HR representatives

If an employee cites COVID-19 as a reason for not returning to the workplace, supervisors/managers and local HR should follow a specific process. We recommend the following:

- **Ask:** In a non-accusatory manner, ask the employee to explain in as general terms as possible why they do not wish to return.
- **Listen:** Listen carefully to the employee's answer.
- **Respond:** Depending on the answer the employee provides, reply as follows:

If employee cites . . .	Supervisor/Manager/Local HR should . . .	DDR should . . .
Age, Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, Caring for Young Children or Family Members in a High-Risk Population	Provide employee contact information for divisional disability representative (DDR) , and ask them to contact that individual immediately. Also, let the employee know that you will contact the DDR, as well.	Address employee's concerns if they are related to medical condition. Otherwise, consult with divisional HR , which may reach out to OHR-Workforce Relations .
Underlying Health Condition	Provide employee contact information for divisional disability representative (DDR) , and ask them to contact that individual immediately. Also, let the employee know that you will contact the DDR, as well.	Address employee's concerns in accordance with established guidance. As needed, consult with the Employee Disability Resources (EDR) Office .
Any other reason (e.g., Fear of Exposure, Fear of Discriminatory Treatment, ¹ Child-Care Reasons, Desire to Remain on Unemployment, Desire to Refrain from Working)	Consult with divisional HR immediately and follow up with the employee as soon as possible.	[These concerns are addressed by divisional HR (not DDRs). Questions from divisional HR on these matters should be directed to OHR-Workforce Relations .]

Especially with any reasons contemplated in the first two rows above (those beginning with "Age" and "Underlying . . ."), it is important that supervisors and managers proceed with caution and not make additional inquiries of the employee without first consulting the [DDR](#). Supervisors/managers should avoid discussing medical issues with employees. If an employee raises their own medical issues, supervisors/managers should let the employee know that they cannot discuss their medical information with them and should refer them to the [DDR](#).

¹ For instance, employees of Asian descent may fear harassment due to COVID-19.

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DDR process

If an employee in your unit is hesitant to return to work due to a disability or chronic medical condition, we will need to consider whether a reasonable accommodation can be made. The DDR will work with the employee to identify if there are any reasonable alternatives.

The goal for DDRs is to consult with the employee and complete their analysis as soon as possible and without delay. However, due to the complexity and anticipated increase in requests, please note that the process may take some time. The DDR will consult with the manager/supervisor on next steps if a potential modification or accommodation is considered for the employee.

For more information contact smartrestartHR@ohr.wisc.edu

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Office of Human Resources
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

