01.08 Employee Furlough Due to Occupational Exposure to Infectious Diseases

Purpose

To provide a mechanism for furlough of employees at UTMB who have had occupational exposures to infectious diseases and to prevent transmission of communicable diseases to patients and healthcare workers.

Audience

All employees of UTMB hospitals, clinics, outpatient surgical center, contract workers, volunteers, and students.

Policy

All employee exposures to infectious diseases will be investigated by the Department of Healthcare Epidemiology as follows:

- The diagnosis of the suspected infectious disease will be confirmed in the source patient.
- A determination will be made by the Department of Healthcare Epidemiology as to which employees sustained an exposure to the source patient.
- For exposed employees, the dates of occupational exposure or period of occupational exposure will be determined.
- Each exposed employee's immune status relative to the source patient's disease will be determined by:
  - A positive history for the source patient's infectious disease or;
  - When the exposed employee has a negative history for the source patient's disease or the source patient's disease is one for which a positive history is a poor indicator of immunity, a serologic test will be obtained through the Employee Health Center to determine whether the exposed employee has antibody to the source patient's infecting microorganism.
- In the event that a serologic test is required to determine an employees immune status, the employee will be required to provide a blood sample, or will be furloughed without pay for the duration of the incubation period of the disease.
- An attempt will be made to determine whether the exposed employee has had recent exposure in the community to the same disease as that of the source patient.
- Employees with established occupational exposures, who are not immune to the source patient's disease, will be furloughed and appropriate start and stop dates for the furlough period will be determined.
- Both the furloughed employee and appropriate management staff will be notified of the inclusive dates of the furlough.

- Each employee exposure will be handled individually, and decisions regarding furlough will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Employees may be furloughed due to exposure to an infectious disease on the recommendation of Healthcare Epidemiology, which has been approved by the Hospital Administration.
- Employees will not be required to use sick or vacation time during their furlough period, but will receive institutional Administrative leave.
- Furloughed employees who develop the disease to which they were exposed must be cleared by the Employee Health Center before they return to work.
- Diseases in which exposure of employees may result in furlough:
  - Varicella
  - Measles
  - Mumps
  - Rubella
  - Pertussis
  - Others-at the discretion of Healthcare Epidemiology
- If an employee develops signs and symptoms consistent with a reaction to a vaccination given by the employee health center and it is necessary for the employee to be out of work, the employee will be allowed to take administrative leave instead of sick time. The signs and symptoms will be closely monitored by the employee health center.