01.08 Employee and Student Furlough Due to Occupational Exposure to Infectious Diseases

Purpose

To provide a mechanism for furlough of employees and students 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 and students of UTMB hospitals, clinics, outpatient surgical center, contract workers and volunteers.

Policy

All employee and student 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 and/or students sustained an exposure to the source patient.
- For exposed employees and students, the dates of occupational exposure or period of occupational exposure will be determined.
- Each exposed employee's and/or student'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 or student 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 Employee Health or Student Health to determine whether the exposed employee or student has antibody to the source patient's infecting microorganism.
- In the event that a serologic test is required to determine the immune status of an employee or student, the employee or student will be required to provide a blood sample, or will be furloughed without pay or placed on leave of absence from course work for the duration of the incubation period of the disease.
- An attempt will be made to determine whether the exposed employee or student has had recent exposure in the community to the same disease as that of the source patient.
- Employees or students with established occupational exposures, who are not immune to the source patient's disease, will be furloughed (students placed on medical leave of absence) and appropriate start and stop dates for the furlough/leave period will be determined.
- Both the furloughed employee and appropriate management staff (or

student and office of Student Affairs) will be notified of the inclusive dates of the furlough.

- Each employee or student exposure will be handled individually, and decisions regarding furlough will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Employees may be furloughed and students may be placed on leave of absence 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. Students' absences will be excused and will not count against absence limits in the course. However, the student may be required to make up missed course activities at the discretion of the course director.
- Furloughed employees or students, who develop the disease to which they were exposed, must be cleared by Employee Health or Student Health, respectively, before they return to work or course work, respectively.
- Diseases in which exposure of employees or students 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 Employee Health 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 Employee Health.
- If a student develops signs and symptoms consistent with a reaction to a vaccination given by Student Health and it is necessary for the student to miss scheduled course activities, the student's absence during this time will be excused and will not count against absence limits in the course. However, the student may be required to make up missed course activities at the discretion of the course director. The signs and symptoms will be closely monitored by Student Health.