

Collyn J. Baeder, Director of Student Wellness

Illness Documentation Policy for Class Absences

At Colby, we deeply value the wellness of our students and the public health of our community. We recognize that wellbeing is foundational to full engagement in all the opportunities that Colby has to offer. We recognize that some illnesses may not necessitate a doctor's appointment, or require any immediate treatment, but may still be contagious and temporarily debilitating (e.g., some gastrointestinal illnesses). To prevent the transmission of these illnesses to other members of the community, and to prioritize recovery and wellbeing, the students experiencing such illnesses will not be required to visit with a medical provider for the purpose of securing documentation for absences of two consecutive class meetings or fewer. However, students should still *notify their professors with as much advance notice as possible about missing class*. For all absences that *extend beyond two consecutive class meetings*, students may be asked to submit medical documentation to their Class Dean, who will then communicate with the student's professor(s). Please note that **any and all class absences on days when an exam or major presentation is scheduled** will require the student to obtain medical documentation. In addition, for classes that meet *only once per week, such as labs and seminars*, students may be asked to secure medical documentation if *more than one meeting* is missed. Students should consult each of their individual course syllabi and professors for additional details about class absence policies.

Rationale

- **Protect Population Health** - reducing student travel and interaction, for the purpose of obtaining medical documentation, lowers the likelihood of illness transmission among the Colby community and medical staff.
- **Prioritize Student Wellbeing** - student rest and recovery is prioritized via alleviation of the travel and coordination needed to obtain medical documentation.
- **Reduce Student Medical Bills** - a doctor's appointment is required to obtain medical documentation, which is billed to student health insurance, and is typically not covered at 100%.
- **Increase Appointment Availability** - fewer provider appointments booked for medical notes alone increases access for medical necessities.
- **Reduce Impact on Administrative Capacity** - a reduction in time spent by MaineGeneral providers and the Dean of Studies office to produce and communicate about medical documentation, increasing time for other important student support necessities.
- **Treatment Not Warranted** - for many common illnesses, a specific treatment may not be warranted, beyond rest, fluid, and self-care practices (e.g., common cold, norovirus, etc.), leaving no medical necessity for a doctor's appointment in some cases. (Free medical guidance for students by phone is still always available during business hours from MaineGeneral nurses.)

- **Student Preparation for Life Post-Colby** - closer alignment with employment norms, in which many employees must communicate proactively with employers about absences, but not produce medical documentation for short-term illnesses. Likewise, rest, fluid, and self-care practices are commonly sufficient for minor illnesses (vs. consistently seeking a doctor's appointment).
- **Transition to Off-Campus Health Center** - accessing medical documentation for illnesses was easier historically, when the health center was on campus, and did not entail travel nor medical bills for students.