STUDENT HEALTH CENTER

OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

Bloomington

Dear IU Instructor,

The Indiana University Student Health Center (IUSHC) does not provide excuses for students who miss classes, assignments, or tests secondary to short term illness, injury, or mental health problems. This is a revised policy as of August 2019 and is consistent with the policies of our peer institutions regarding medical/psychological excuse notes.

The IUSHC is willing to work with students who have ongoing or serious illness, injury, or disability to provide care and documentation as necessary. If students need help navigating attendance concerns, they should contact the Student Care and Resource Center.

Often students seek care at the Student Health Center for the purpose "to get a note" for illnesses and problems that do not otherwise require professional attention, such as viral upper respiratory infections and self-limited gastrointestinal illnesses. This is problematic for many reasons:

1. Requiring an office visit solely to obtain a note can create financial hardship for students, who may need to use insurance or pay out of pocket. It disadvantages students whose insurance we do not accept or who cannot afford the fee, limiting their ability to receive the same consideration as peers who can pay.
2. It creates an overload on our services, and we cannot see all the patients who need to be seen for other reasons.
3. It can increase the spread of communicable illnesses.
4. Often these students come in to be seen after the illness or problem and the provider has no verifiable way to know if the student was ill or incapacitated, relying solely on the student's history. As medical and mental health professionals, we take the students' report as the truth.
5. The student may fabricate illnesses or exaggerate symptoms to obtain a note and then that report becomes a permanent part of their medical or mental health record.
6. Requiring a visit to the Student Health Center is a time burden on the student.
7. Many students state that an instructor requires written or specific medical/psychological information to be excused from a class. Requiring a student to share this private health information compromises patient confidentiality and creates a problem on how that information may be shared with others.
8. Most importantly, it is counter to our mission of educating our students to be wise consumers of healthcare when we require them to seek professional medical or psychological care when self-care is sufficient.

For these reasons, we feel the decision to excuse a student from class should be based on a conversation between the student and the instructor, without requiring a medical or mental health provider to become involved.

Sincerely,

David Fletcher, MD
Interim Medical Director
Indiana University Student Health Center