



Policy Title	Involuntary Leave of Absence for Students Policy
Policy Number	4014
Category	Student
Applicability	College-wide
Responsible Office	Division of Student Affairs
Effective Date	Fall 2025

## I. Policy Statement

Requiring a student to take a leave of absence is rare and only happens when current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence indicates that there is a significant risk to the student's health or safety, or the health or safety of others in the college community, or the student's behavior severely disrupts the college environment, where no reasonable accommodations can adequately reduce that risk or disruption.

Consistent with the Suffolk County Community College Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy, the college prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of any type of disability or any other characteristic protected by applicable Federal and/or State law in the administration of Suffolk County Community College programs and activities.

Suffolk County Community College offers a range of resources, support services, and accommodations to address the physical and mental health needs of students. However, on rare occasion, a student's needs may require a level of care that exceeds the care that the institution can appropriately provide. Where current knowledge about the individual's medical condition and/or the best available objective evidence indicates that a student poses a significant risk to their own safety not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations, or where a student's behavior severely disrupts the College environment and the student does not want to take a voluntary leave of absence, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs has the authority to place a student on an involuntary leave of absence in accordance with this Policy and its implementing administrative procedures.

## II. Rationale

The purpose of this Policy is to support the health and safety of all members of the college community by: (1) ensuring the college and its faculty, staff, and students may carry out their proper activities without substantial interference or danger of physical harm; and (2) providing a fair, transparent process when the college must resort to acting to place a student on an involuntary leave of absence in alignment with applicable legal standards.

## III. Scope and Applicability

This Policy applies college-wide to all students in credit-bearing courses at the college.

#### **IV. Responsible Office/Executive**

The Vice President for Student Affairs and the Associate Deans for Student Affairs have responsibility for the implementation and review of this Policy. Individuals with questions about this Policy should contact the Vice President for Student Affairs or Associate Dean for Student Affairs for more information.

#### **V. Definitions**

**Student:** Any person who attends Suffolk County Community College in credit-bearing courses.

**Individualized Threat Assessment:** An individual risk assessment based in the standards set forth by the National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA).

#### **VI. Policy Elaboration**

##### **A. Scope of the Policy and Relationship to Other College Policies**

A leave of absence is an administrative process; it is not a disciplinary process.

This policy is not intended to be punitive and does not take the place of disciplinary actions that are in response to violations of the Student Code of Conduct, or other policies and directives, nor does it preclude the removal or dismissal of students from the college or college-related programs as a result of violations of other college policies or school or department protocols.

This policy does not limit the college's ability to place enrollment holds on students for reasons beyond the scope of this policy.

This policy does not relieve a student of any financial obligations to the college that were incurred prior to the time the involuntary leave of absence was imposed.

Nothing in this policy limits the power of the college to take administrative action to ensure the safety of the college community in accordance with all appropriate laws and policies.

Nothing in this policy prevents the college from engaging in a temporary or interim suspension under its policies if necessary under the circumstances. Any such cases shall be appropriately reviewed per college policy.

In emergency situations involving an imminent or ongoing threat of harm to the student or any other member of the college community, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs in the exercise of his or her reasonable judgment, may require a student to be immediately prohibited from entering the college campuses or facilities utilized for college programs or activities while such individualized assessment and review under this policy is taking place. Such students will receive written notice to this effect as quickly as possible.

Nothing in this policy prevents the college from following its policies governing conduct and maintenance of public order, as necessary.

## **VII. Related Administrative Procedures**

### **A. Process for Evaluation**

Before placing any student on an involuntary leave of absence, the CARE team will conduct an individualized threat assessment. Students referred for such evaluation shall be so informed in writing by college email, registered mail and phone call. The evaluation shall be scheduled, if at all possible, within seven (7) business days from the date of the referral letter, and shall be held at the College. Students may be accompanied by a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, or physician of their choice (i.e., at the student's expense) who may observe, but not participate in, the evaluation process.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will issue a notice to the student in writing that an involuntary leave of absence is under consideration. The written notice will include the reason(s) why the student is being considered for an involuntary leave of absence. The notice will also provide contact information for a neutral advisor outside of the decision-making process under this policy (the "Advisor"), with knowledge of the college's involuntary leave of absence process who will serve as a resource to answer any student questions about the process from referral to return to the college. The Advisor will work with the student throughout the involuntary leave of absence process and any appeals. The Advisor shall be copied on all notices to the student after the student provides consent to have the Advisor as part of their process. In the written notice, the student will be encouraged to respond before a decision regarding a leave of absence is made and will be given a specified time period within which to do so.

To the extent required by applicable law, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs must consider potential reasonable accommodations and/or modifications that could eliminate the necessity for an involuntary leave of absence. The Associate Dean must document all such considerations, accommodations, and related decisions.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may also confer, as feasible and when appropriate depending upon the matter, with individuals knowledgeable about the student's needs or behavior regarding the need for an involuntary leave of absence. Each case may vary, but conferring individuals can include:

- Faculty members;
- Department head for programs that lead to professional licensure, as appropriate;
- Representatives from the college's Health Services Office (with appropriate authorization);
- The student's treatment provider(s) or other health care professionals (with appropriate authorization);
- Representatives from the Mental Health and Wellness Center (with appropriate authorization for any providers who have provided services to the student);
- Member(s) of the CARE team; and/or
- Other individuals who may be appropriate in an individual matter.

The student may be asked to execute a Consent for Release of Information Form providing certain college personnel with temporary authority to obtain information from the student's health care provider(s) regarding issues relevant and appropriate to the consideration of an involuntary leave of absence when there is a need for the college to have access to that information as part of the interactive process and individualized assessment. If a student refuses to execute this document or to respond within the timeframe set by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs may proceed with assessment based on the information in their possession at that time.

When evaluating whether an involuntary leave of absence is appropriate, the college will consider specific criteria, such as:

- Whether current knowledge about the individual's medical condition and/or the best available objective evidence indicates that a student poses a significant risk to the health or safety of a member of the college community;
- Whether a student is unable or unwilling to carry out substantial self-care obligations and poses a significant risk to their own safety, not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations; and/or
- Whether a student's behavior severely disrupts the college environment.

The individualized assessment for each factor, based on reasonable judgment that relies on current medical knowledge to the extent that information is available, or the best available objective evidence, should capture:

- the nature, duration, and severity of the risk or disruption;
- the probability that the risk or disruption will actually occur; and
- whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will appropriately mitigate risk or disruption, thereby eliminating the need for an involuntary leave of absence.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will give significant weight to the outcome of the threat assessment along with, when applicable the student's treatment provider(s) identified by the student and after appropriate authorizations regarding the student's ability to function academically and safely at the college with or without reasonable accommodations.

## **B. Decisions on Involuntary Leaves of Absence**

Following the Associate Dean for Student Affairs consultations and review of the relevant documentation and information available, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will make a decision regarding whether the student should be placed on an involuntary leave of absence, and shall provide written notice of the decision to the student. This written notice of decision shall include information about the student's right to appeal the decision and information about reasonable accommodations available during the appeal process. The review and notice of decision shall be performed in a reasonable and timely manner.

### **If an Involuntary Leave of Absence is Imposed:**

The written notice of any decision concerning the student shall set forth the basis for the decision; a timeframe for when the student must leave the college; the student's right to appeal the decision;

and information about reasonable accommodations available during the appeal process. This notice shall also set forth when the student may be eligible to return to the college and the conditions and/or requirements the student will need to satisfy to be eligible for return. This written notice shall also inform the student of their right to reasonable accommodations in the return process and will provide contact information for the Disability Services office. The length of the student's leave will be determined on an individual basis. The student's Advisor shall be copied on all notices concerning all decisions related to the student if the student so designates and consents.

**If an Involuntary Leave of Absence is Not Imposed:**

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may impose conditions and/or requirements under which the student is allowed to remain at the college using the least restrictive appropriate means possible.

**C. Appeals**

Within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the decision from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs the student may submit an appeal of the decision in writing to the Vice President for Student Affairs. The appeals shall be heard by a three (3) person Board of Appeals. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs who imposes an involuntary leave of absence shall not hear appeals or render decisions on appeals. The Vice President for Student Affairs cannot have been involved in the original decision-making process. The written request for appeal must specify the particular substantive and/or procedural basis for the appeal, and must be made on grounds other than general dissatisfaction with the decision of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. While the appeal is pending and being heard by the Board of Appeals, the original decision will remain in place. All appeals decisions will be issued within seven (7) calendar days of submission.

The criteria for appeal will be limited to the following:

- Disproportionate Findings: if there is any information not previously considered that would allow the student to remain with a reasonable accommodation and may change the outcome of the decision;
- New Information: if there is any new information not previously available to the student that may change the outcome of the decision-making process;
- Procedural irregularities: if there were any procedural irregularities that materially affected the outcome of the matter to the detriment of the student who appealed the decision.

After reviewing the matter fully, the Board of Appeals will issue a written decision affirming, modifying, or reversing the decision to place the student on an involuntary leave of absence. The Board of Appeal's decision shall be final, and no other appeals or grievance procedures are available at the college.

**D. Implications of an Involuntary Leave of Absence**

**Student Status:** The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will complete the class withdrawal process for the student; and authorize a leave of absence for the student from the Admissions Office (i.e., if the student is enrolled in a restricted curriculum with limited seat availability). Note that such a leave maintains the date of matriculation and, if a seat is available, gives the student preference for readmission into the program ahead of any new student.

**Effective date(s) of leave:** A student must leave the College within the timeframe set forth by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or Board of Appeals, as applicable, in the decision to impose an involuntary leave of absence. The leave will remain in effect until:

- The Associate Dean for Student Affairs has determined after an individualized assessment the parameters of which shall be set forth in the written decision of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, or the Board of Appeals, as applicable, that the student is able to return to the college with or without reasonable accommodations, and
- The student has complied with any college requirements applicable to all students returning from a leave and all the conditions mandated by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, or Board of Appeals, as applicable.
- Students are not permitted to return mid-semester or mid-term if placed on a leave of absence. The college shall clearly identify and state deadlines for all requests to return, which will align with the start of each academic term per year.

**Notification:** At any time while the student is on leave, the Vice President for Student Affairs or Associate Dean for Student Affairs may notify a student's parent, guardian, emergency contact, or other individual, consistent with the law, if notification is deemed appropriate under the circumstances, including but not limited to if deemed necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals in accordance with the U.S. Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA) and implementing college policies..

**Association with the College while on leave:** Students on an involuntary leave of absence are not permitted to be present at the college and are not permitted to engage in any college-related activities, including on-campus employment or any online/remote programs or activities sponsored by the college.

**Tuition and Fees:** Consistent with SUNY's and the college's local policies and procedures, students who leave the college before the end of a term may be eligible to receive refunds of portions of their tuition. See the college's [refund policy](#) and procedures for more information.

International students (F-1 and J-1 Visa holders) placed on an involuntary leave of absence must speak with the appropriate person at the college who works with international students regarding their Visa status and the effect an involuntary leave of absence may have on that status.

## **E. Request for Return**

In addition to the general requirements all students must meet when returning to the campus after a leave of absence, as well as any conditions imposed by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or Board of Appeals, as applicable, for return from an involuntary leave of absence as outlined in the decision, students seeking to return from an involuntary leave of absence imposed for reasons of personal or community health and safety may be required to submit additional documentation related to the factors set forth as part of an individualized assessment

A student must make a written request to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to return to the campus. Generally, a student shall not be allowed to return until one full semester has elapsed or

until the leave period in the involuntary leave of absence notification has elapsed, and all conditions and/or requirements have been met.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may require the student to provide evidence that the student, with or without reasonable accommodations, has sufficiently addressed the issues that previously established the criteria for imposing an involuntary leave of absence. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may also ask, confer with, or seek information from others to assist in making this determination. The information sought may include:

- At the student's discretion, documentation of efforts by the student to address the issues that led to the leave;
- Release of academic records to inform treating clinicians (with appropriate authorization);
- Release of treatment information to the extent necessary to determine if the student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the leave (with appropriate authorization);
- Consultation with the campus's CARE team or Mental Health and Wellness Services to the extent necessary to determine if the student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the leave (with appropriate authorization); and/or
- Consultation with the Disability Services Office.

All returning students must meet the essential eligibility requirements and any technical standards of the College and, if applicable, the relevant school or department, with or without reasonable accommodations. If the Associate Dean for Student Affairs determines that the student is ready to return to the campus, the student will be notified in writing of the decision, including the reason for the decision, within a reasonable time after the student has submitted a request for return and required documentation per this policy.

A student not permitted to return may appeal the decision to the Board of Appeals under this policy.

## **VIII. Cross-References**

- [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)

## **IX. References**

- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) [Standard II](#)
- [SUNY Policy 3202: Involuntary Leave of Absence for Students Policy](#)

## **X. History / Revision Dates**

Adoption Date: June 12, 2025 (replaced the Medical Suspension Policy previously adopted by the Board of Trustees on September 17, 2015)