



## Protecting Your Confidentiality & Your Employment During Addiction Treatment

**F**or some people the main obstacle keeping them from entering addiction rehab is their job. How do they tell their boss? What do they say to co-workers? Will they be fired? Fortunately the answers are often easier than they think. At St. Joseph Institute, we take care of most communication with the employer.

### How do you know my job will be protected?

For those people who work in an organization with more than 50 employees, and have been employed a **year or more**, their job is well protected. The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides up to 12 weeks of leave each year for medical reasons, while protecting your job and your confidentiality. The process is simple. We call the Human Resources department on your behalf, advise that you need to take “medical leave” and request the paperwork. Discussions with the HR staff are protected by confidentiality laws and very few personal details are disclosed. The HR staff is directed to inform your supervisor that you are “taking medical leave” and no more information is disclosed. A government form is completed and leave is granted.

In larger organizations, the process is even more confidential because they often have an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) which manages these requests. We communicate directly with the EAP, and the employer receives no confidential information. The same process is used when applying for short term disability. Confidential information never goes beyond the HR staff and employment is protected.

In smaller organizations, or when an individual has been employed for less than one year, a discussion needs to take place with the person in the organization responsible for HR. We secure a commitment to keep the information confidential before we disclose the employee’s name. As with FMLA, supervisors and colleagues should not hear more than the statement “they are on medical leave.” There is never an obligation to disclose more information to colleagues or supervisors, unless by choice.

### How will my boss react?

We have found that employers are very supportive of people seeking help to improve their lives and get well. In our experience, employers will often go the extra mile to provide benefits and support that exceed the written contracts.

The bottom line: don’t let job concerns prevent you from getting the help you need. Being caught using on the job or performing below expectations, is where the real trouble lies. Take the initiative to start treatment. We will take care of the paperwork.

*St. Joseph Institute offers a residential treatment program for adults suffering from addiction. Our one-on-one counseling, Christian spirituality, holistic approach, passionate desire to see people heal, and belief in the goodness of each individual are among the defining qualities of our program. The Institute’s beautiful campus is located on a mountainside near State College in central Pennsylvania.*