

Part 7

Seek help with challenges

As the employer, your job is to identify the risk factors that threaten your assistant's work ability and to try to prevent these risks. As an employer, you must comply with agreements, regulations and laws related to occupational health.

Arranging occupational health care

The employer has a statutory obligation to arrange occupational health care for their employee. Occupational healthcare contributes to a smooth employment relationship, for instance, in the following ways:

- Occupational health examinations serve as security for recruiting an assistant.
- Occupational health care experts can also help you plan the work in a way that ensures a healthy and safe workplace for your assistant and yourself.
- Occupational health care can furthermore help in various challenging situations, e.g. with sickness absence obligations or if the assistant's sick leave is prolonged.

Starting up occupational health collaboration

Before occupational health care collaboration starts, the employer must conclude an agreement on occupational health care management. Services for the disabled can help in finding a suitable service provider. Disability services serve as the substitute payer in occupational health care costs, but only up until the statutory minimum.

Occupational health care, for instance:

- Examines and assesses the employee's state of health and work ability
- Examines and assesses the health and safety of the work and working conditions
- Offers advice and guidance
- Provides referrals for follow-up measures as required. Don't forget that arranging occupational health care is the employer's statutory obligation. Statutory occupational health care is mostly preventative advice and monitoring. It does not include medical services.

When an employee falls ill

We all get sick sometimes. That is why it is a good idea to agree on the procedure to follow in case of illness right at the start of the employment relationship. For instance, you should agree on how the employer should be informed of an absence due to illness and when a sick note is needed, and how wages are paid when the employee falls ill.

Reporting absences due to illness, and pay during sick leave

- Agree with the employee when a doctor's certificate is needed for sick leave. The employer may ask for it already on the first day of sick leave.
- Go over with your employee how wages are paid in case of illness. The employer must submit information about the sick leave to payroll accounting. An employee's paid sick leave consists of the first day of illness + 9 workdays if these days would have been the employee's workdays according to the shift schedule, employment contract or regular working hours. After that, the employee must determine their income on their own, for instance, with Kela.
- You can contact services for the disabled if you are in need of a substitute assistant due to your assistant's sick leave.

What if absences due to illness are recurring or prolonged?

- Discuss recurring and/or prolonged absences with your employee.
- When an employee falls ill, it is important to agree how you will stay in contact especially during long absences. Also discuss when the return to work will take place.
- Use the 'Smooth everyday life' discussion template in the discussion if necessary.
- If illness is negatively affecting your employee's work ability, they can make an appointment with an occupational health nurse on their own initiative or on the employer's instruction.
- The occupational health nurse will, if necessary, refer the employee to an occupational health physician, who will assess the employee's work ability and plan options for returning to work and continuing at work together with the employee.
- If necessary, an occupational health negotiation involving the employee, employer and occupational health care can be arranged. You can also find up-to-date information from disability services and the Heta Union's website.
- When planning a return to work, you should discuss together whether it is a good idea for the employee's state of health to begin with part-time or full-time work.

Varma's work ability services' corporate service number provides help with work ability issues

As an employer, you can call the number **010 192 065** (Mon–Fri, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.), if you need advice with employees' work ability challenges, vocational rehabilitation or disability pensions. When you call, mention that you are an employer of a personal assistant.