§ 71. Reinstatement after separation for disability. Where an employee has been separated from the service by reason of a disability resulting from occupational injury or disease as defined in the workmen's compensation law, he or she shall be entitled to a leave of absence for at least one year, unless his or her disability is of such a nature as to permanently incapacitate him or her for the performance of the duties of his or her position. Notwithstanding the foregoing, where an employee has been separated from the service by reason of a disability resulting from an assault sustained in the course of his or her employment, he or she shall be entitled to a leave of absence for at least two years, unless his or her disability is of such a nature as to permanently incapacitate him or her for the performance of the duties of his or her position. Such employee may, within one year after the termination of such disability, make application to the civil service department or municipal commission having jurisdiction over the position last held by such employee for a medical examination to be conducted by a medical officer selected for that purpose by such department or commission. If, upon such medical examination, such medical officer shall certify that such person is physically and mentally fit to perform the duties of his or her former position, he or she shall be reinstated to his or her former position, if vacant, or to a vacancy in a similar position or a position in a lower grade in the same occupational field, or to a vacant position for which he or she was eligible for transfer. If no appropriate vacancy shall exist to which reinstatement may be made, or if the work load does not warrant the filling of such vacancy, the name of such person shall be placed upon a preferred list for his or her former position, and he or she shall be eligible for reinstatement from such preferred list for a period of four years. In the event that such person is reinstated to a position in a grade lower than that of his or her former position, his or her name shall be placed on the preferred eligible list for his or her former position or any similar position. This section shall not be deemed to modify or supersede any other provisions of law applicable to the re-employment of persons retired from the public service on account of disability.