

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Eligibility

An employee who has worked for the District for at least 12 months and who has worked at least 1,250 hours in the 12 months preceding the beginning of the leave is eligible for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The 12 months an employee must have been employed by the District do not need to be consecutive months. The 1,250 hours of service do not include vacation leave, sick leave, holidays or other paid leaves of absences. However, an employee returning from fulfilling his/her Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) covered service obligation shall be credited with the hours of service that would have been performed but for the period of military service in determining whether the employee worked the 1,250 hours of service.

Leave Entitlement

An eligible employee is allowed to take up to 12 workweeks of leave during a 12-month period. The District has chosen the following method to determine the 12-month period in which the 12 workweeks of leave entitlement occur: the 12-month period measured forward from the date any employee's first FMLA leave begins.

An employee may be eligible for 26 workweeks of FMLA leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness. The District will determine the "single 12-month period" using the 12-month period measured forward from the date an employee's first FMLA leave to care for the covered service member begins.

Types of Leave

An eligible employee may take FMLA leave for the following purposes:

1. Birth and care of a newborn child;
2. Placement with an employee of a son or daughter for adoption or foster care;
3. Care for a spouse, child or parent with a serious health condition. An employee may not take FMLA leave to care for a parent-in-law;
4. Recovery from a serious health condition that keeps the employee from performing the essential functions of his/her job;
5. To respond to a "qualifying exigency" that arises because a spouse, child or parent is a military member on covered active duty or

6. To care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin of the covered service member.

The District requires eligible employees to use any accrued and unused paid vacation, personal or sick leave concurrently with unpaid FMLA leave.

An employer cannot compel an employee to use, nor may an employee elect to use, accrued medical/sick leave in any situation for which the leave could not normally be used.

Spouses Employed by the District

If both spouses eligible for leave are ~~both~~ employed by the District, their combined amount of leave for birth, adoption, foster care placement and parental illness may be limited to 12 weeks. If both spouses are employed by the District and eligible for leave, their combined amount of leave to care for a covered service member is limited to 26 weeks.

Intermittent and Reduced Leave

FMLA leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule under certain circumstances. Intermittent leave is leave taken in separate blocks of time due to a single qualifying reason.

Reduced leave is a leave schedule that reduces the employee's usual number of hours per workweek or hours per workday.

Intermittent or reduced leave is available for the employee's own serious health condition; to care for a parent, son or daughter with a serious health condition; to care for a covered service member's serious injury or illness or for leave taken due to a qualifying exigency. Such leave may be used for the birth or adoption/placement of a child only if the Board agrees.

If an employee needs leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule for planned medical treatment, the employee must make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the employer's operations.

If the employee needs intermittent leave or leave on a reduced schedule that is foreseeable, the Superintendent may require the employee to temporarily transfer during the period that the intermittent or reduced leave schedule is required to an available position for which the employee is qualified and which better accommodates recurring periods of leave than does the employee's regular position.

If an eligible instructional employee (i.e., those whose principal function is to teach and instruct students in a class, a small group or an individual setting) needs intermittent leave or leave on a reduced leave schedule due to foreseeable medical treatments, and the employee would be on leave for more than 20% of the total number of working days over the period the leave would extend, the District may require the employee either to:

1. Take leave for a period or periods of a particular duration, not greater than the duration of the planned treatment or
2. Transfer temporarily to an available alternative position for which the employee is qualified, which has equivalent pay and benefits and which better accommodates recurring periods of leave than does the employee's regular position.

Benefits

The Board maintains the employee's health coverage under the group health insurance plan during the period of FMLA leave on the same conditions as coverage would have been provided if the employee had been continuously employed during the entire leave period. Prior to the beginning of the FMLA leave, the employee should make arrangements with the Treasurer to pay the employee's share of health insurance.

An employee may, but is not entitled to, accrue any additional benefits or seniority during unpaid FMLA leave. Benefits accrued at the time leave began (e.g., paid vacation, sick or personal leave to the extent not substituted for unpaid FMLA leave), however, must be available to an employee upon return from leave.

The Board is entitled to recover health care premiums paid during the leave if the employee fails to return from leave. Recovery cannot occur if the employee fails to return because of the continuation, recurrence or onset of a serious health condition or due to circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

Notice

When the FMLA leave is foreseeable, the employee must notify the Superintendent at least 30 days prior to the date when the leave is to begin. If the leave is not foreseeable, the employee must give notice as early as is practical. An employee shall provide at least verbal notice sufficient to make the District aware that the employee needs FMLA-qualifying leave, and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave.

The Board may deny the leave if the employee does not meet the notice requirements.

Certification

The Board may require the employee to provide a complete and sufficient certification from a health care provider containing specific information if he/she requests a medical leave. If there is a question concerning the validity of such certification, a second and, if necessary, a third opinion can be required, both at the expense of the District.

Upon the employee's return to work from FMLA leave occasioned by the employee's own serious health condition, the Board requires that the employee present a fitness statement from the employee's health care provider certifying that the employee is able to return to work.

Reinstatement

When the employee returns from the leave, the Board reinstates the employee to the same or an equivalent position with equivalent benefits, pay, terms and conditions of employment. An employee has no greater right to reinstatement or to other benefits and conditions of employment than if the employee had been continuously employed during the FMLA leave period.

Instructional Employees

Special leave rules apply to instructional employees. Instructional employees are those employees whose principal function is to teach and instruct students in a small group, or in an individual setting. This term includes teachers, athletic coaches, driving instructors and special education assistants such as signers for the hearing impaired. It does not include teacher assistants or aides who do not have as their principal job actual teaching or instructing, nor does it include auxiliary personnel such as counselors, psychologists or curriculum specialists. It also does not include cafeteria workers, maintenance workers or bus drivers.

The following limitations also apply to instructional employees who take leave near the end of a semester for purposes other than the employee's own serious health condition.

1. When an instructional employee begins leave more than five weeks before the end of a semester, the Board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if the leave will last at least three weeks and the employee would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the semester.
2. When an instructional employee begins leave less than five weeks before the end of a semester, the Board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if the leave will last more than two weeks and the employee would return to work during the two-week period before the end of the semester.
3. When an instructional employee begins leave less than three weeks before the end of a semester and the leave lasts more than five working days, the Board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester.

In all cases, only the period of leave until the employee is ready and able to return to work shall be charged against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement. Any additional leave required by the Board is not counted as FMLA leave. However, the Board is required to maintain the employee's group health insurance and restore the employee to the same or equivalent job upon the conclusion of the leave.

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