



# ST. MICHAEL - ALBERTVILLE SCHOOLS

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## Support Staff Maternity Leaves at STMA

First and foremost, congratulations on expecting a new addition to your family! This document should help walk you through notifying the district of your need for a leave of absence, how your pay and benefits may be impacted, and how you can comfortably transition back into the work environment following the birth of your child. As you go through this document, if you have any questions, or want to set up a meeting with Human Resources in advance of requesting a leave, please contact Michelle Neu, at [michellen@mystma.org](mailto:michellen@mystma.org).

### Step 1: Leave of Absence Request Form & Medical Note

The first step is to notify Human Resources and to fill out a [leave of absence request form](#). You will also need to request a note from your medical provider that includes documentation of your “due date.” On the leave of absence request form, please put your “due date” for the start date of your leave of absence. This date can be changed manually once the baby is born to indicate the baby's birth date and the official start of your leave of absence unless otherwise necessary.

Once completed, please request a time to meet with your Supervisor (Principal or Director) and share the form with them. Your supervisor will send the form to the Human Resources team. If you prefer, you can also send the form directly to Human Resources. In addition, please provide a copy of the medical note from your provider to the Human Resources team. The medical note does not need to be shared with your supervisor.

### Step 2: Application for FMLA Coverage

Upon receipt of an employee's leave request form, Human Resources will review the form and follow up with the employee via email within 5-7 business days of receiving the leave request. The subject line of the email communication from Human Resources to you will read “FMLA Leave Request - please respond.” Attached to this email, you will receive a [Notice of Eligibility](#) and a [Designation Notice](#) with your approval or denial of FMLA coverage.

The [Family Medical Leave Act](#) (FMLA)<sup>1</sup> provides up to 12 weeks of unpaid job protection for employees who meet the following requirements:

- You work for a covered employer (STMA is a covered employer)
- You have worked for STMA schools at least 12 months

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see also <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla> (last visited 11.1.2024)



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- You have at least 1,250 hours of service at STMA within 12 months prior to the beginning of your leave of absence effective date (rolling-calendar year)

It is important to understand FMLA does not correlate with “paid time.” The issue of how much paid time an employee is eligible for is based on the terms set out in the Master Contract. *The fact that a leave is designed as FMLA does not automatically mean that it is also paid time.*

If you do not qualify for FMLA, you still may be eligible for certain rights under a Minnesota state law called the *Pregnancy and Parental Leave* statute.<sup>2</sup> Employees may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during pregnancy or upon the birth or adoption of their child. Employees are eligible for this leave regardless of the size of their employer and the amount of time for which they have worked for the employer.

### Step 3: Review Pay & Benefits Implications

Paid Sick Leave Use Support staff are eligible to use up to 30 days of earned safe and sick time for vaginal birth or up to 40 days of earned safe and sick time for a c-section immediately following the delivery.

Personal Time Use Support staff have the option to request to use any accrued personal time and/or vacation time (12-month employees only) during the duration of their leave. This will be applied after the 30 (or 40) hours of earned sick and safe time have been used. Once baby is born, complete the [STMA Notification of Birth Form](#) to designate your personal leave request.

Health Insurance Coverage The school district will continue to provide 12 weeks of district contributions for medical insurance and other related benefits during the duration of a leave of absence covered under FMLA or the Pregnancy and Parental Leave Act.

*Note: You have 30 days from the delivery date to add your child as a dependent, you will need a copy of the child's birth certificate or hospital birth record to initiate the qualifying life event in BenefitFocus. To access the BenefitFocus portal, refer to the BenefitFocus app in your Google Gmail account (by clicking on the waffle/dots next to the Settings icon).*

Paychecks: For hourly staff who *elect to take unpaid leave* following the birth of a child, you will not receive paychecks during the duration of your leave once sick, personal and/or vacation time is exhausted and paid.

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<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/parental\\_leave.pdf](https://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/parental_leave.pdf) (last visited 11.1.2024)



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## Step 4: Notify District of Baby's Birth

When the baby is born, please reach out to your Supervisor and notify the Human Resources team that your leave of absence has begun by completing the [Notification of Birth form](#).

If you have the baby before the due date, you can maintain your original return to work date, however, this may result in additional unpaid days.<sup>3</sup> HR will assume you want to keep your original return to work date as listed on your leave form unless you inform Human Resources that you wish to change this date. *Note: If you are placed on bed rest or cannot work for any extended period of time prior to the birth of your child, please contact the HR team and submit a doctor's note stating any restrictions or requirements to begin your leave earlier than expected.*

If you have the baby later than the due date, HR will extend your leave end date out to the end of 12 weeks from the baby's actual birthdate and reset your return-to-work date.

## Step 5: Determine Return to Work Date

Once you have determined your return-to-work date, please notify your supervisor and the Human Resources team at least 20 workdays in advance of the date. Your return-to-work date is determined by Human Resources. You should not return to work earlier than your designated return to work date without authorization from Human Resources.

## Step 6: Upon Return - Review Policies

The district has been recognized by the Minnesota Department of Health as a [Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace](#)

[Minnesota law](#) requires employers to provide breastfeeding parents with reasonable break time to express milk and a private room or other location for milk expression, other than a bathroom or a toilet stall, with access to an electrical outlet and in close proximity to the employee's workspace. Please review [STMA's lactation policy](#) and work with your supervisor and/or HR team to identify a space where you can comfortably pump at work and store your expressed breastmilk.

If you have requests for specific accommodation, you can schedule an appointment with Human Resources (HR) and engage in an interactive conference (virtual or in person). HR will review your request and issue a determination usually within a business day. It is important to remember that you are not required to speak with your supervisor about accommodation requests if you are uncomfortable for any reason.

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<sup>3</sup> Any time used for medical necessity prior to the birth of the child would be eligible for earned safe and sick time subject to verification by medical documentation.



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## Other Helpful Information

[Pregnant Workers Fairness Act](#) (effective June 2023): The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) is a new law that requires covered employers to provide “reasonable accommodations” to a worker’s known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless the accommodation will cause the employer an “undue hardship.”

[FLSA Protection to Pump at Work](#): The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires employers to provide reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for their nursing child for one year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to express the milk. Employees are entitled to a place to pump at work, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public.

## Important Reminders

1. [STMA is committed to observing employee rights](#)

STMA has dedicated resources to help employees navigate leave. Our HR goal is to ensure compliance with applicable laws, policies and contracts. The application of leave rights is very fact specific, situational and complicated.

2. [Human Resources is responsible for leaves](#)

STMA is a collaborative organization where we encourage strong relationships between staff and their immediate supervisors. But leaves can sometimes involve information or requests that are uncomfortable to discuss with your supervisor. HR is responsible for handling leaves and ensuring compliance with applicable laws and contracts including any requests for accommodation.

3. [Your start and return to work dates from leave are determined by HR](#)

The final decision on leave dates is a mutual decision between the employee and employer- you do not always get the exact dates you are looking for and in certain limited instances your return date may be adjusted by HR. (For example, generally staff return to work on Mondays versus Wednesdays).

**HUMAN RESOURCES**  
**11343 50<sup>TH</sup> STREET NE**  
**ALBERTVILLE, MN 55301**  
**WWW.STMA.K12.MN.US**



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4. This document is a general informational advisory and not intended as a legal contract or a summation of all employee rights in every situation

This document is not intended to be a staff handbook or legal summary of all possible employee leave rights. Any applicable laws, district policies and contracts will supersede this document in the event of an apparent conflict of information. This document may be updated or modified at any time and at the discretion of Human Resources as necessary.

## District HR Contacts

Douglas Birk - Director of Administrative Services Email: <a href="mailto:douglasbi@mystma.org">douglasbi@mystma.org</a> Phone: (763) 497-6504 (internal x5504)	Angel Lussier - Human Resources Supervisor (Certified Staff) Email: <a href="mailto:angelalu@mystma.org">angelalu@mystma.org</a> Phone: (763) 497-3180, x5546
Michelle Neu Benefits & Leave Coordinator Email: <a href="mailto:michellen@mystma.org">michellen@mystma.org</a> Phone: (763) 497-3180, x5408	Heather Ludwig - Employees Services Specialist (Maintenance & Support Staff) Email: <a href="mailto:heatherlu@mystma.org">heatherlu@mystma.org</a> Phone: (763) 497-3180, x5532

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## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Who do I notify that I am going to have a baby?** You will need to notify your Supervisor and the Human Resources team through a leave of absence request form.

**Q. When should I apply for a leave of absence?** You can apply for a leave of absence as soon as you notify your Supervisor and the Human Resources team of your pregnancy. You can list your expected first day of leave as your “due date.” This may change if the baby arrives sooner or later than the listed date.

Generally, to take FMLA leave, you must notify the Human Resources team at least 30 days in advance. If advance notice is not possible, such as because of a change in events or a medical emergency, notice must be given as soon as practicable.

Note: Because of the current shortage of substitutes, the district is grateful for any sooner notice you are comfortable providing, in order for us to find a suitable long-term substitute to cover your classroom during the duration of your leave.

**Q. What paperwork do I have to fill out to request a leave of absence?** You will fill out a [leave request form](#). You will also need a document from your doctor noting your “due date” for our records.

Note: You do not need to provide your supervisor with the doctor’s note. Please send it to Michelle Neu at [michellen@mystma.org](mailto:michellen@mystma.org)

**Q. If necessary, how do I go about requesting additional FMLA leave? (anything past the 12 weeks)**

Additional leave past the 12-week allotment will not be covered under FMLA. You can request approval for an extended leave of absence from your Supervisor and the Human Resources team. In some cases, your contract rights may permit a leave longer than otherwise permitted by FMLA.

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**Q. What happens if I have the baby before my leave is supposed to start?** You will notify your Supervisor and the Human Resources team when the baby is born. This will be the effective date of your leave of absence unless otherwise necessary.

**Q. What happens if my baby doesn't come until after the due date? Can I work up until the baby comes and shift my maternity leave for the length requested?** Yes, absolutely! If the baby comes after the due date, we will change the effective date of your maternity leave to the baby's birth date. We can also change your return date to a later date so you can still take the full 12 weeks of leave.

**Q. What do I need to do to prepare for having a long-term substitute?** If a long-term substitute is required in your role, you will work with your supervisor to post for a long-term substitute position. Please ensure that you are leaving documented expectations and detailed notes of the long-term substitute.

**Q. What are the required details, info, plan etc. that I need to give a sub?** Please consult with your building principal or supervisor.

**Q. Who can I set up a meeting with in order to get my questions answered?** Michelle Neu, Benefits and Leave Coordinator [michellen@mystma.org](mailto:michellen@mystma.org)

**Q. Who do I talk with to set up a pumping schedule?** You will work directly with your supervisor to set up a schedule that works well for you. However, if you have any issues or are uncomfortable speaking with your supervisor, you may contact Human Resources. HR will set up an interactive conference and evaluate your requests in accordance with applicable laws and policies.

**Q. Are my lunch and prep my only options for when I can pump?** No. Please work with your supervisor to mutually determine times throughout your workday that are convenient for you to pump. Again, if you are uncomfortable with having this conversation with your supervisor for whatever reason, you may reach out to Human Resources for a separate conference.

**Q. What do I do if that is not enough time for me or I disagree with what my supervisor says?** Contact the Human Resources team. HR will set up an interactive conference, allow you to bring in Union

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representation, and formally proceed through this process with you to ensure compliance with applicable laws and policies.

**Q. *The Minnesota state law suggests that moms cannot have their pay, sick leave, or personal leave docked for pumping. Does the district comply with this law?*** Yes. You will not be required to take time off to pump and your salary will not be impacted.

**Q. *If I need to take additional leave due to medical reasons or mental health reasons related to pregnancy, how can I go about doing this?*** You can request additional time off to be approved by your Supervisor and Human Resources. The Human Resources team will take each request individually and will determine whether the days are eligible for pay or if they will need to be taken unpaid.

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