

Policy

PERSONNEL

6301

LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITIONS OR FAMILY CARE

I. Statement of Policy

- A. It is the policy of the District to allow an employee to be absent from his/her duties for the reasons stated in the Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”), as amended. This includes absence for the following purposes:
1. The employee’s own serious health condition that renders the employee unable to work at all, or unable to perform at least one of the essential functions of the employee’s job;
 2. To care for a son, daughter, spouse, or parent with a serious health condition;
 3. To adopt a child, or to receive a child into foster care;
 4. To care for the employee’s newborn child;
 5. To care for a son, daughter, spouse, parent, or next of kin who is a member of the armed services and who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty; or,
 6. To respond to certain qualifying exigencies when a family member is on active duty or is called to active duty with the armed services.
- B. An employee absent for a purpose within the scope of this Policy and compliant with obligations under this Policy will be reinstated to their same or an equivalent position at the end of the absence, provided the employee continues to meet the qualifications for the position and the employee’s employment would not have been terminated or altered had the employee not been absent.
- C. This Policy and any administrative regulations or procedures approved by the Superintendent shall be implemented so as to comply with the FMLA and any applicable provisions of the District’s collective bargaining agreements.

II. Employee Eligibility

A. Length of Service

To be eligible for an allowed absence under this Policy, an employee must have been employed by the District for a minimum of twelve (12) months (52 weeks). Nonconsecutive periods of employment will be counted together to determine

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eligibility, provided no break in employment exceeds seven (7) years. Time spent fulfilling a Reserve or National Guard obligation after initial employment with the District will be considered as time employed by the District.

B. Hours Worked

To be eligible for an allowed absence under this Policy, an employee must have worked a minimum of 1,250 hours for the District over the previous 12 months. Satisfaction of this requirement shall be calculated using the definition of “hours worked” under the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”). An employee who is away from work to fulfill a Reserve or National Guard obligation will be credited with “hours worked” as though the employee had performed their normal duties for the District during that time.

C. Serious Health Condition

An employee qualifies for an allowed absence under this Policy when the employee experiences an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment by a health care provider; and when the employee’s presence is necessary to care for a parent, son, daughter, or spouse who experiences such a condition.

D. Care of a Newborn Infant

An employee who is the mother or father of a newborn infant qualifies for an allowed absence to care for the newborn during the 12 months following the birth.

E. Adoption or Foster Care

An employee who has a son or daughter placed with them for adoption or foster care qualifies for an allowed absence during the 12 months following the placement, as well as prior to the placement for purposes related to the placement (e.g., court appearances, counseling sessions).

F. Military Caregiver

An employee who is the son, daughter, spouse, parent, or next of kin of a current member of the Regular Armed Forces, the National Guard, or the Reserves, or of a veteran, qualifies for an allowed absence under this Policy if the military member is on the temporary disability retired list because of a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty for which they are undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; is otherwise in outpatient status; or is otherwise on the temporary disability retirement list. In the case of a veteran,

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leave is available if the injury or illness manifested itself within five years of the treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

G. Active Duty Qualifying Exigency

If the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of an employee is a member of the National Guard or Reserves, and is on active military duty, or is called to active duty, then the employee is allowed to be absent for one or more of these qualifying exigencies:

1. Short-notice deployment,
2. Military events and ceremonies, including family assistance or support meetings,
3. Childcare and school activities,
4. To make financial and legal arrangements related to the deployment,
5. Counseling services for the employee, covered military member, or a child in the required degree of relationship to the covered military member,
6. Rest and recuperation,
7. Post-deployment activities, and
8. Additional activities that arise out of the covered military member's active duty or call to active duty, provided the District and the employee agree that the activities qualify as an exigency.

If the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of an employee is a member of the Regular Armed Forces and is deployed to a foreign country, then the employee is allowed to be absent for one or more of the above contingencies.

III. Duration of Excused Absence

- A. An employee who qualifies for leave under any combination of purposes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 in Section I.A. of this Policy is allowed an absence of up to twelve (12) weeks in a school year (July 1 - June 30).
 1. Where both the mother and the father of a newborn, adopted, or foster placed child are employees of the District, the total absence allowed under

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this Policy to the two parents for purposes 3 and 4 in section I.A. of this Policy shall be 12 weeks.

- B. An employee who qualifies for leave to care for an injured or ill service member (purpose 5 in Section I.A.) is allowed a single absence of up to 26 weeks in a single 12 month time period. The single 12 month time period used for this purpose begins when the employee is first absent for this purpose.
 - 1. During the 12 month time period used for this purpose, the employee's total absence for all FMLA purposes may not exceed 26 weeks.
 - 2. If the employee requests leave to care for more than one injured or ill service member, or requests leave due to more than one injury or illness of the same service member, the absence allowed by this Policy shall be calculated in accordance with the limitations and allowances of applicable federal regulations.

IV. Intermittent or Reduced Schedule Absence

- A. Intermittent absences, or a reduced schedule, will be classified as an allowable leave under this Policy where it is certified as medically necessary because of the serious health condition of the employee, a covered family member of the employee, or a covered service member to whom the employee has the required relationship.
 - 1. Intermittent leave shall be taken and recorded in increments of time consistent with the practice for other absences.
- B. An employee will also be allowed intermittent absences related to a qualifying exigency arising from the active duty, or call to active duty, of a qualified military member.
- C. An employee will not generally be allowed intermittent absences related to the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child, but such absence may be allowed at the discretion of the Superintendent.

V. Information Provided by District to Employees

- A. A notice explaining the FMLA, and providing other required information, shall be posted physically in District buildings in a manner that complies with federal regulations. A copy of this general notice shall also be provided to each new employee.

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- B. When an employee requests a leave of absence, or the District acquires knowledge that an employee's absence may be for a purpose covered by this Policy and FMLA, the District shall, within five (5) business days, provide the employee with written notice of:
 - 1. Whether the District considers the employee eligible for leave under FMLA and this Policy, and, if not, the reason; and
 - 2. The employee's rights and obligations, and the consequences of not fulfilling those obligations.
- C. The District shall notify the employee in writing that the employee's absence is designated as allowable leave under this Policy and FMLA, or it is not. This notice shall be given within five (5) business days of the District having sufficient information to make this determination.
 - 1. The District's requirement that the employee present a fitness-for-duty certification shall be explained in the determination notice, if applicable.
 - 2. The District's requirement that the employee's accumulated paid leave be applied to the absence shall be described in the determination notice.
- D. The District shall responsively answer questions from employees regarding their rights and responsibilities under FMLA and this Policy.

VI. Information Provided by Employees to District

- A. Where the reason for an employee's absence is foreseeable, the employee is required by this Policy and FMLA to give 30 days notice of the intended absence and the reason for it. Where 30 days notice is not possible, the employee must give as much notice as is practicable. This will apply to many cases of planned medical procedures (for the employee or a family member), adoptions and foster placements, and births.
 - 1. An employee should provide this notice to their immediate supervisor, or to Superintendent.
 - 2. Employees must consult with the District when planning medical treatment, and make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment so as not to disrupt District operations.
- B. Where the need for an employee's absence is not foreseeable, the employee must provide the District with as much notice as is practicable under the circumstances.

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The employee should provide enough information to establish that the purpose of the absence fits the requirements of this Policy and FMLA, and the expected duration of the absence.

- C. Employees shall responsively answer District questions intended to clarify whether an absence qualifies as an allowable absence, and to allow planning for the employee's absence.

VII. Coordination with Paid Leave

The general rule is that an employee is not paid for time spent away from work for one of the purposes covered by this Policy. However, if the employee has accrued paid benefit time, the District requires the employee to apply that accrued time to the allowable absence, so that the employee is paid during the absence and the balance of accrued time is reduced accordingly. The amount of benefit time, and the category of benefit time used, is determined by the terms and conditions of applicable Board policies, established District practices, and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

VIII. Continuation of Health Care Insurance

- A. During any absence that qualifies for treatment under this Policy and FMLA, the District shall maintain the employee's coverage under a group health insurance plan on the same conditions as coverage was provided prior to the absence. In addition,
 - 1. Any changes made to the scope or terms of coverage provided to active employees under the group health plan will be made available to an employee absent from work in accordance with this Policy, and
 - 2. Notice of any opportunity to change plans or benefit levels that occurs while the employee is absent will be given to the employee.
 - 3. The District's continuation of group health plan benefits will end if circumstances occur that end, or would have ended, the employment relationship with the absent employee.
- B. During an allowable absence under this Policy and FMLA, an employee's obligation to pay group health insurance premiums continues. Notice of this obligation will be given at the time that the absence is designated as coming under this Policy.

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1. If paid leave is applied to an allowable absence, employee premium obligations shall be deducted from payroll in the usual manner.
2. If the allowable absence is unpaid, the employee is required to make payment to the District at the time that a payroll deduction would otherwise have been processed by the District.
 - a. If the employee's payment is more than 30 days late, the Superintendent shall decide whether the District will exercise its right under FMLA to discontinue the employee's coverage.
 - b. If an employee fails to make a payment, the Superintendent shall decide whether the District will exercise its right under FMLA to recover the amount from the employee.

IX. Required Certifications

- A. An employee's request that an absence for medical reasons be treated as an allowable absence under this Policy shall be supported by a medical certification sufficient to allow the District to determine that the absence is related to a serious health condition of the employee, a family member, or a qualifying member of the armed services. Unless an alternate form is promulgated by the Superintendent, the certification shall be on the form included in the FMLA regulations of the U.S. Department of Labor.
 1. If the District finds a submitted certification to not be complete and sufficient, it will notify the employee in writing what additional information is required and provide at least seven (7) calendar days for the employee to provide additional information.
 2. The District may invite the employee to authorize direct communication with the employee's health care provider, but may not require such authorization as a precondition of determining whether the absence qualifies as FMLA leave.
 3. Recertifications will be requested as permitted by FMLA and applicable regulations.
- B. The first time an employee requests that an absence be classified as allowable because of a qualifying exigency arising out of active duty (or call to active duty) of a covered military member, the employee shall provide a copy of the covered military member's active duty orders or other documentation issued by the

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military sufficient to allow the District to determine that the absence qualifies for treatment under this Policy.

- C. At the discretion of the Superintendent, the District shall require an employee absent pursuant to this Policy and FMLA to periodically report on the employee's status and intent to return to work.
- D. An employee whose allowable absence was related to the employee's own serious health condition shall be required to submit a fitness-for-duty certification, addressing only the conditions described in previously submitted medical certifications, before returning to work.

X. Superintendent Responsibility

The Superintendent shall insure that required notices are properly posted in District buildings, that required information is distributed to staff members, and that supervisory personnel are familiar with the District's obligations under FMLA and the internal procedures for meeting those obligations.

Waterville Central School District
Adopted: 07/22/97
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