

Extended Medical Leave Guidelines

I. Leave Programs: Overview & Eligibility

While these programs often overlap, they serve different purposes.

1. Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) – *State Paid Benefit; contract and pay are stopped while on this type of leave.*

A state-run insurance program that provides partial wage replacement and job-protected leave.

- **Eligibility:** You must have worked at least **820 hours** in Washington State (with any employer) during the "qualifying period" (typically the first 4 of the last 5 completed quarters).
- **Job Protection:** New for 2026, you qualify for job protection and health insurance maintenance after **180 calendar days** of employment with the same employer, regardless of hours worked.
- **Benefit Amount:** The state determines the benefit amount, which might be up to 90% of your weekly pay, capped at **\$1,647/week** for 2026.
- **Potential Impacts to Your FTE:** It is considered unpaid leave at the district level; may impact salary placement, retirement service credits, and SEBB eligibility.
- **Typical Amount of Leave:** Up to 12 weeks = own or family member's qualifying event; up to 16-18 weeks = maternity and bonding leave or multiple family events (your and a family member's qualifying event).
- **Family Member:** spouses or domestic partner, children, parents and legal guardians, siblings, grandchildren, grandparents. In-laws (parents, grandparents, children), someone who has an expectation to rely on you for care.

2. **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** – *Federal Unpaid Leave; most employees use sick leave for this*

A federal law providing **unpaid**, job-protected leave for specific reasons, allows staff to use their sick leave.

- **Eligibility:** You must have worked for the district for at least **12 months** AND have worked at least **1,250 hours** in the 12 months immediately preceding the leave.
- **Job Protection:** You qualify for job protection and health insurance maintenance if you meet the eligibility requirements.
- **Benefit Amount:** Your use of sick leave or other leave maintains your current salary level (unless you choose to do unpaid FMLA).

- **Potential Impacts to Your FTE:** There is no change to your FTE if you use your sick leave.
 - **Typical Amount of Leave:** Up to 12 weeks per benefit year.
 - **Family Member:** spouse, child, parent, or birth and care of newborn or placement of child for adoption or foster care.
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II. Staff Action Steps

1. **30-Day Notice:** If your leave is foreseeable (e.g., birth or surgery), you must provide written notice to HR at least 30 days in advance.
 - a. Written notice includes completion of the Extended Leave Form in [Power School Records](#) (under available forms) including anticipated dates of leave.
 - b. If leave dates need to be adjusted after you have turned in your form, email Shari Strickland and Mindy Meyer regarding requested adjustments at least two weeks prior to the leave ending (does not include unforeseen circumstances).
2. **Submit Paperwork:**
 - a. For an employee choosing to take PFML, your medical provider must complete the "[Certification of Serious Health Condition](#)".
 - b. For employees choosing to take FMLA, you need a doctor's note that states length of leave and reason for leave (unless maternity or paternity leave).
3. **For PFML,** you must apply directly at paidleave.wa.gov.
 - a. The district cannot apply for you.
 - b. To be paid, you will need to provide weekly claims to the Employment Security Department.
 - c. Consult with your Payroll Officer on what changes will occur to your contract, paycheck, and/or health insurance.

III: Questions?

For questions regarding your leave form or how different types of leave will interact, please contact the Human Resources Department:

- Mindy Meyer, mmeyer@wwps.org; 6713
- Shari Strickland, sastrickland@wwps.org; 6710

For questions regarding changes to your contract, pay, or benefits, please contact the Business Office:

- Haley Roughton - Certificated Payroll Officer, hroughton@wwps.org; 6736
- Megan Murray - Classified Payroll Officer, mmurray@wwps.org; 6721

For questions regarding your PFML application status or benefit amount, please contact the Employment Security Department at (833) 717-2273.

IV. Additional Leave Definitions

Term	Definition
4-Hour Minimum	Claim PFML benefits in increments as small as 4 consecutive hours.
Benefit/Calendar Year	A period of 52 consecutive weeks beginning with the first day you take leave.
Health Continuity	Starting Jan 1, 2026, the district must maintain your health insurance (SEBB) during PFML job-protected leave, provided you pay your share of premiums.
Job Protection	The right to be restored to your same or an equivalent position upon return from leave. In 2026, this applies after 180 days of employment.
Qualifying Event	The specific reason for a leave, such as your own serious health condition, bonding with a new child (birth, adoption, or foster), or caring for a family member with a serious illness. Varies between PFML and FMLA.
Qualifying Period	The timeframe used to determine if you've worked enough hours (820 hours) to be eligible for PFML. It is typically the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters. 1250 hours for FMLA. SEBB eligibility = 630 hours.
Stacking/ Consecutive	Taking one type of leave (like FMLA) and then another (like PFML) to extend total time off.
Typical Work Week	The average number of contracted hours you work per week, used to calculate your prorated benefit if you work part-time while on leave.
