

Employee's Guide to Taking a Leave of Absence



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Leave of Absence Guide

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Types of Leave of Absence

Medical

When an employee is unable to work due to their own illness, injury, or medical condition.

Minnesota Paid Leave

A state-administered leave program that provides benefits when an employee is unable to work for any of the following reasons:

- Caring for their own serious health condition
- Caring for a family member
- Bonding with a child following birth, adoption, or foster placement
- Addressing safety needs related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking
- Military leave

Care of a Family Member

When an employee needs to care for a child, spouse, parent, or other eligible family member due to illness, injury, or serious health condition.

Pregnancy

Leave for medical recovery and treatment related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Parental

Leave to bond with and care for a newborn, newly adopted child, or newly placed foster child following the conclusion of a pregnancy or placement.

Adoption or Foster Care

Leave to complete adoption or foster care placement requirements and to care for a newly adopted or newly placed foster child.

Military

Leave when an employee is called to active military duty, training, or other qualifying military service.

Military Exigency

Leave for qualifying exigencies arising from the active duty or call to active duty of an employee's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin who serves in the National Guard, Reserves, or Armed Forces.

Mobility

Teachers who have five (5) years of service in the district and ten (10) years of pension-eligible service in Minnesota are eligible for a mobility leave of up to five (5) years in accordance with [M.S. §122A.46](#) and [M.S. §354A.091](#).



Professional Training

Leave granted to pursue additional education, training, or professional development that benefits both the employee and the district.

Charter School

A leave granted to work in a charter school for an approved period.

Child Care

A leave to provide care for a child who is below school age, generally for up to one year.

General non-compensatory

Unpaid leave of absence is granted for personal reasons, generally for up to one year.

What is FMLA?

The [Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 \(FMLA\)](#) is a federal law that requires covered employers to provide eligible employees with job-protected, unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons.

Qualifying Reasons for FMLA Leave

- The employee's own serious health condition
- Caring for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition
- Pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, or placement of a foster child
- Qualifying military exigencies or caring for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness

Employee Eligibility

To be eligible for FMLA leave, an employee must:

- Have worked for the employer for at least 12 months.
- The 12 months do not need to be consecutive.
- Have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 months immediately preceding the leave

Leave Entitlement

Eligible employees may take up to 12 workweeks of unpaid, job-protected leave within a 12-month period for qualifying reasons.

During an approved FMLA leave, employees maintain their benefits coverage under the same terms as if they were actively working, including continued district contributions toward medical insurance. Refer to your bargaining unit agreement for specific district contributions.



Minnesota Paid Leave

Minnesota Paid Leave (MN Paid Leave) is a state-administered program that provides partial wage replacement and job protection when employees need time away from work for qualifying medical, family, safety, or military-related reasons.

You may be eligible for Paid Leave if you experience a qualifying event that lasts **at least seven days**. These days do not need to be consecutive. For example, if you have chronic migraines or attend recurring medical appointments that total seven days or more, you may receive benefits for the time you are unable to work.

Qualifying Reasons Paid Leave

Medical Leave

You may take medical leave to care for your own serious health condition, including:

- Pregnancy or childbirth
- Surgery
- Chronic medical conditions
- Injuries
- Other health conditions certified by your healthcare provider

Family Leave

You may take family leave for the following reasons:

- Bonding with a child following birth, adoption, or foster placement
- Care for a family member with a serious health condition
- Support a military family member called to active duty
- Addressing certain safety-related issues, including domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking affecting you or a family member.

How Much Will I Be Paid?

Paid Leave provides a percentage of your regular wages while you are on leave.

- Most people receive between **55% and 90%** of their regular wages
- Weekly benefits are capped at the state's average wage.
- The current maximum benefit is **\$1,423 per week**.

Estimate your payments:

[Estimate your payments | Minnesota Paid Leave](#)



How Much Leave Can I Take?

During a single benefit year, you can take:

- Family leave
 - Up to **12 weeks**
- Medical leave
 - Up to **12 weeks**

Your benefit year begins the first day you use MN Paid Leave.

If you qualify for both medical leave and family leave during the same benefit year, you may take up to **20 weeks total** (not 24 weeks).

Example: An employee who gives birth may receive:

- 8 weeks of Pregnancy-related Medical Leave, and
 - 12 weeks of Bonding Leave
- for a total of **20 weeks of Paid Leave**

For additional information about MN Paid Leave program, visit: [Minnesota Paid Leave](#) or call 651-556-7777.

Contractual Entitlements

In accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement, accrued sick leave may be used for the following purposes:

- **Employee illness or injury:** Employees may use all available accrued sick leave.
- **Illness or injury of a dependent child:** Employees may use all available accrued sick leave.
- **Care for a spouse, parent, or household member with a serious health condition:** Employees may use a contractually designated number of accrued sick leave days per contract year. Refer to your bargaining unit agreement for specific eligibility and limits.

FMLA vs. MN Paid Leave vs. Contractual Entitlements

FMLA

- Provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave during a 12-month period.
- Requires the employer to maintain the employee's position, or an equivalent position, while on approved FMLA leave.
- Continues the employee's group health benefits for up to 12 weeks while on approved FMLA leave.



MN Paid Leave

- Provides up to **12 weeks of medical leave**, up to **12 weeks of family leave**, with a **combined maximum of 20 weeks** per benefit year
- Provides **job protection** for eligible employees who take approved MN Paid Leave
- Continuation of the employee's **group health benefits** during approved MN Paid Leave
- Provides **partial wage replacement**, generally ranging from **55% to 90% of wages**, subject to the state's maximum weekly benefit amount

Contractual Entitlements

- Allow employees to use accrued paid leave benefits, such as sick leave and vacation time, in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.
- May provide a designated leave of absence for employees who do not meet FMLA eligibility requirements.
- Offers additional leave and pay protections as outlined in the applicable labor agreement.

Paid vs. Unpaid Leave

Paid Leave

- Paid time off is deducted from your available sick, vacation, and/or personal leave balances.
- All regular payroll deductions, including benefit premiums, will continue to be withheld from your paycheck.
- You may be eligible to receive Short-Term Disability (STD) benefits while using accrued leave. Short-Term Disability is administered separately through MetLife and requires a separate claim process.
- Once your approved sick or vacation leave has been exhausted, you cannot retroactively request additional accrued leave for the same absence. Any additional time away from work may be considered unpaid leave, subject to applicable policies and approvals.

Unpaid Leave

- Once all accrued sick, vacation, and personal leave balances have been exhausted, your leave status will become unpaid, and you will no longer receive a paycheck.
- Your active benefits coverage will end on the last day of the month in which you enter unpaid status.

- 
- You will receive a COBRA election notice offering the option to continue your benefits coverage beginning the following month. Under COBRA, you are responsible for the full cost of coverage, including the portion previously paid by the district.
 - If you are enrolled and meet eligibility requirements, you may continue to receive Short-Term Disability (STD) and Long-Term Disability (LTD) benefits through MetLife. Please note that you are not eligible for Long-Term Disability benefits until all accrued sick leave has been exhausted.

Continuous vs. Intermittent

Continuous Leave

A continuous leave of absence is taken in one uninterrupted period of time, during which you do not work.

- Any medically related continuous leave of absence must be approved by Benefits, regardless of whether paid time off will be used during the leave.

Intermittent Leave

An intermittent leave of absence is taken in separate blocks of time for a single qualifying reason.

This may include:

- Occasional absences for medical appointments, treatment, or symptom management.
- A temporary reduced work schedule due to a qualifying medical condition.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Once an employee has been approved for intermittent FMLA leave, they are not required to provide a doctor's note for each absence related to their approved FMLA qualifying reason.

However, employees must:

- Indicate that the absence is FMLA-related when following normal call-in procedures.
- Notify Benefits each time they use time under their approved intermittent FMLA leave.

Leave of Absence Process

Who Can Apply?

All regular employees are eligible to apply for a leave of absence.



When to Apply

Absences of 3 to 10 Consecutive Days

A doctor's note is required and must include:

- Dates you are unable to work
- Date you are cleared to return to work
- Any work restrictions upon return

If restrictions are indicated:

- Your supervisor must approve that the restrictions can be accommodated before you return to work.
- If accommodation cannot be made, notify the Benefits Office.

Absences of More Than 5 Consecutive Days

You must begin the formal Leave of Absence (LOA) process.

Notice Requirements

- Notify your supervisor as soon as you know you may need a leave.
- For FMLA-qualifying leaves, employees should provide 30 days' advance notice when possible.
- If advance notice is not possible, notify your supervisor as soon as feasible.
- For medical leaves, you are not required to disclose your specific medical condition or diagnosis to your supervisor.

How to Apply

As soon as you become aware that you will need a leave of absence, contact the Benefits Office at benefits@spps.org.

The following are required:

1. FMLA Certification of Healthcare Provider

- Completed by the treating healthcare provider.

2. Leave of Absence Request

- Submitted through PeopleSoft.
 - Navigate to:
 - Forms Tile → Employee Forms → Leave of Absence Request

Important Submission Deadlines

- Leave requests remain pending until all required paperwork is received.
- Under FMLA guidelines, requested certification paperwork must be submitted within 15 calendar days of the employer's request.
- If Benefits requests additional or missing documentation, employees have 15 calendar days to provide it.



What to Expect After Submission

Within approximately 5 business days, the Benefits Team will:

- Review the submitted documentation.
- Determine whether the leave qualifies for FMLA protection.
- Send a decision letter to the employee's email address(es) on file.
 - Employees may also request that the letter be mailed to their home address.
- Notify the employee's:
 - Supervisor
 - Lead Clerk
 - Human Resources Consultant
 - Human Resources Coordinator

The notification will include:

- Type of leave
- Leave dates
- FMLA eligibility status

Medical information remains confidential and is not shared.

Important Confidentiality Notice

Employees should submit leave-related medical documentation directly to Human Resources.

- Employees are not required to provide medical leave paperwork to their supervisor.
- Human Resources **cannot disclose specific medical information** to supervisors.
- Any discussion of medical details with a supervisor is entirely at the employee's discretion.

Health Insurance During a Leave of Absence

Paid Leave of Absence

- Your health insurance coverage will continue without interruption while you are on a paid leave of absence.
- Coverage will continue during both the school year and the summer months.

Unpaid Leave of Absence

- Your health insurance coverage will end on the last day of the month in which you become unpaid.
- After your coverage ends, you will be offered the opportunity to continue your benefits through **COBRA** coverage.
- If you are a **10- or 11-month employee** and your unpaid leave extends through the summer, any summer health insurance deductions that were previously collected will be adjusted.
- You will also be offered **COBRA coverage for the summer period**.

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- If your unpaid leave qualifies under FMLA eligible or is an approved MN Paid Leave, your benefits will continue without interruption.

Example:

- If your unpaid status begins on **October 15**, your employer-sponsored health insurance remains active through **October 31**.
- Beginning **November 1**, you may continue coverage through **COBRA** if you elect it.

Key takeaway: Health insurance continues normally during a paid leave. During an unpaid leave, coverage typically ends at the end of the month you become unpaid, and COBRA continuation coverage will be offered.

Timesheet Requirements While on Leave?

If you are on a leave of absence and using accrued sick, vacation, or personal time, you must continue to submit your timesheet.

- Before your leave begins, review your available sick, vacation, and personal time balances. You can find your current balances on your most recent pay stub.
- Submit your e-timesheet in advance of your leave whenever possible.
- Payroll must receive your timesheet in order to process payment. If your timesheet is not submitted while you are on leave, you will not be paid for the applicable time.

Return to Work from Leave

If you are returning from a medical leave of absence:

1. Submit a **Report of Workability** form to **Benefits** at least **2 business days** before your planned return-to-work date.
2. Benefits will review the form and determine next steps based on the provider's recommendations:
 - **No restrictions:** You may return to work on the date listed on the Report of Workability form.
 - **With restrictions:** Benefits will contact your Supervisor to determine whether the restrictions can be accommodated.
 - If restrictions are included:
 - **If accommodations can be made:** Benefits will notify you that you may return to work with the approved restrictions.
 - **If accommodations cannot be made:** Your leave will be extended. Benefits will send you a new leave designation letter and notify your Supervisor, Lead Clerk, Human Resources Consultant, and Human Resources Coordinator



If you are returning from any other type of leave:

- You may return to work on your approved return date. No Report of Workability form is required unless otherwise directed.

After You Return

- On your return date, Benefits will confirm with your Supervisor that you have returned to work.
- Once your return is confirmed, Benefits will update your status in **PeopleSoft**.
- You will not be able to submit a timesheet for hours worked until your return-to-work status has been updated in PeopleSoft.
- If you do not return as scheduled, Benefits will follow up with you to determine next steps.

ADA Accommodation Request Process

If you need an ADA accommodation:

1. Complete the [ADA Reasonable Request Form](#).
2. Emailed the form to ADA@spps.org.
3. The Workers' Compensation/ADA Specialist will review your request and contact you with the next steps.

Short-Term Disability (STD)

STD coverage is available as an optional benefit for benefit-eligible employees who work at least 20 hours per week.

Enrollment

Beginning in 2025, MetLife is the STD insurance carrier.

- Newly hired eligible employees may enroll in STD coverage within **30 days of their hire date**.
- After the initial 30-day enrollment period, STD coverage can only be:
 - Added during the annual Open Enrollment period, or
 - Increased during Open Enrollment.

Evidence of Insurability (EOI)

Employees who elect STD coverage or increase their coverage during Open Enrollment must complete MetLife's underwriting process.

This requires:

1. Completing an **Evidence of Insurability (EOI)** form.
2. Submitting the form directly to MetLife for review.



Coverage becomes effective on the **first day of the month following MetLife's approval.**

Important: Failure to submit the required EOI form will result in the coverage request being denied.

How STD Coverage Works

STD benefits provide income replacement when you are unable to work due to a non-work-related illness or injury.

Benefit Amount

You may elect coverage equal to the lesser of:

- 66.667% of your monthly salary, or
- \$3,000 per month

STD coverage must be in effect before an illness or injury occurs in order for benefits to be payable.

Employees who submit a STD claim are also required to submit a claim for MN Paid Leave. Please note that any benefits received through MN Paid Leave will offset the STD benefits you are eligible to receive.

Workers' Compensation claims are not covered under STD.

When Benefits Begin

Benefits start:

- Day 1 for an accident, or
- Day 8 for an illness

Benefits may continue for:

- Up to 3 months, or
- Up to 6 months for employees who are not eligible Long-Term Disability (LTD)

Finding Your Coverage Amount

You can view your elected monthly STD benefit in:

PeopleSoft Employee Self Service → Benefits Details → Benefits Summary

Calculate Your weekly STD Benefit

To estimate your weekly STD benefit:

Monthly STD Benefit $\times 12 \div 52$ = Weekly STD Benefit

Example: $\$3,000 \times 12 \div 52 = \$692.31$ per week

Your actual benefit is subject to the terms and conditions of the MetLife policy.



Long-Term Disability (LTD)

Carrier: MetLife

Eligibility

- Available to benefit-eligible employees working full-time, as defined by their bargaining unit agreement.
- For participants in the cafeteria plan, LTD insurance is a core benefit.
- Eligible employees are automatically enrolled within 30 days of their hire date or eligibility date.

Benefit Amount

- Provides income protection if you become disabled due to illness or injury and are unable to work for an extended period.
- Pays **60% of your pre-disability salary**
- Benefits are reduced by other income sources, such as:
 - Workers' Compensation
 - Social Security disability benefits
- A **minimum benefit of \$100 per month** applies for qualifying leaves that are also covered by Workers' Compensation
- Maximum monthly benefit: **\$6,000**

When Benefits Begin

- Benefits begin after:
 - A **90-day elimination period**, or
 - The end of accrued sick leave,**whichever is longer.**

Duration of Benefits

- Benefits continue until:
 - Age 65, or
 - Your Social Security Normal Retirement Age**whichever is later.**

Pre-existing Condition Limitation

- A pre-existing condition exclusion applies to all new entrants to the plan.



Definition of Total Disability

First 36 months of Disability

- You are considered totally disabled if you are unable to perform the duties of your regular job or occupation.

After 36 months of Disability

- You are considered totally disabled if you are unable to perform **any occupation** for which you could reasonably be qualified based on your education, training, and prior work experience.

Example

If an employee earns **\$5,000 per month** before becoming disabled:

- LTD benefit = **60% x \$5,000 = \$3,000 per month**
- Any eligible Workers' Compensation or Social Security disability payments would generally reduce the LTD benefit amount.

This coverage helps protect employees from significant income loss during extended periods of disability.

Sick Leave Bank

Eligible Bargaining Units

Employees must belong to one of the following bargaining units:

- AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees)
- Custodial and Operating Engineers
- Educational Assistants (St. Paul Federation of Teachers Representing)
- Nutrition Services
- Teachers (St. Paul Federation of Teachers)
- Teaching Assistants
- Professional Employees Association
- Association of Supervisory and Administrative Personnel

Donating Sick Leave

To donate sick leave to the Sick Leave Bank, an employee must:

- Be a regular full-time or part-time employee in a eligible bargaining unit.
- Be benefits-eligible.
- Have enough accumulated sick leave, based on their FTE, to maintain at least **720 hours** after the donation.
- Not have submitted a resignation or retirement notice to the District prior to making the donation.



Donation Rules

- A sick leave contribution form must be completed and submitted to Human Resources.
- Donations must be made in whole-hour increments.
- Total donations cannot exceed **80 hours** during an employee's District employment.
- Donations are irrevocable once processed by Human Resources.
- Donations are not taxable to the donor and are not tax-deductible.
- Donated hours are valued at the donor's regular rate of pay.

Donation Help Sheet: [Sick Leave Bank Donation HelpSheet](#)

Receiving Sick Leave from the Bank

To receive donated sick leave, an employee must:

- Be a regular full-time or part-time employee in an eligible bargaining unit.
- Be benefits-eligible.
- Have exhausted all accumulated sick leave and any other available paid leave (including vacation, when applicable).
- Be eligible for FMLA leave before the need for donated sick leave.
- Not be receiving:
 - Workers' Compensation
 - Social Security disability benefits
 - LTD benefits
- Not be serving a disciplinary suspension.
- Not have submitted a resignation or retirement to the District.
- Be on an approved FMLA leave due to:
 - Their own serious health condition, or
 - The serious health condition of a spouse, parent, or household member
- Require a prolonged absence from work and experience a substantial loss of income because of the serious health conditions.

Key Requirement

Employees must first use all available paid leave balances before Sick Leave Bank hours can be considered.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

ComPsych is our EAP, providing confidential support and resources to help you and your household members navigate personal and life challenges.

The EAP offers **up to 5 free, confidential counseling sessions per year** for assessment, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up support. These services are available to **all employees and their household members** at no cost.



Professional counselors can assist with a variety of concerns, including:

- Relationships and family issues
- Financial concerns
- Parent and child-related challenges
- Mental health and emotional well-being
- Substance abuse
- Work-related stress
- Gambling concerns
- Childcare and eldercare resources
- Loss and grief
- Other personal or life challenges

Using the EAP is **completely confidential**, voluntary, and free of charge. Whether you are facing a specific challenge or simply need guidance. **ComPsych** is available to provide support and connect you with helpful resources.

For more information, visit: [GuidanceResources Online®](https://www.guidanceresources.com)



**Contact Your ComPsych®
GuidanceResources® Program**

Call: 888.882.0771
TRS: Dial 711
Online: [guidanceresources.com](https://www.guidanceresources.com)
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