

LAGUNA BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

V.

Board Policies Covering All Unrepresented Classified Employees

Board Policy No. 4410: FAMILY CARE AND MEDICAL LEAVE

A. Intent Of Policy

This policy is intended to comply with the federal Family Medical Leave Act of 1993, 29 U.S.C. § 2601 et seq., and the California Family Rights Act of 1991 as amended October 5, 1993, Cal. Gov't Code § 12945.2. No greater or lesser leave benefits will be granted than those provided by applicable state or federal laws. This policy shall be interpreted so that there will be no violation of either state or federal law.

B. Family Care And Medical Leave

Family care and medical leave consists of unpaid leave for a period of up to twelve (12) work weeks in a school year (July 1 through June 30) for one of the following reasons:

1. The birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care with the employee within one year of such birth or placement;
2. to care for the employee's spouse, child or parent with a serious health condition; or
3. if an employee has a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform his or her job.

Family Care and Medical leave is separate and distinct from disability leave for pregnant employees. Pregnant employees may be entitled to a disability leave in addition to a family care and medical leave. Section K describes in detail the interplay between pregnancy leave and family care and medical leave.

If the leave is requested for the placement or birth of a child, and both parents are employees of the District, the total amount of family care and medical leave for both parents is limited to twelve (12) weeks.

C. Definitions

1. "Accumulated Sick Leave" means days of sick leave the employee earned in previous school years and has not taken, thereby accruing a balance from year to year.
2. "Child" means a biological, adopted, or foster child, a step-child, a legal ward or a child of a person standing in loco parentis who is either i) under eighteen (18) years old or ii) over eighteen (18) years old and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability.
3. "Differential Pay Sick Leave" means the right to receive the difference between an employee's regular salary and the amount of money the District pays a substitute.

4. "Employee Benefits" means all benefits provided or made available to employees by the District, including group life insurance, health insurance, disability insurance, sick leave, annual leave, educational benefits, and pensions, regardless of whether such benefits are provided by a practice or written policy of the District or through an employee benefit plan as defined in Section 3(3) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1002 (3)).
5. "Employment in the same position" means employment in the position which the employee held prior to taking a family care and medical leave.
6. "Employment in an equivalent position" means a position that has the same or similar duties, pay, and employment benefits which can be performed at the same or similar geographic location as the position held prior to the leave.
7. "Group health plan" means any plan provided or contributed to by the District to provide health care (directly or otherwise) to the employers, employees, former employees, or the families of such employees or former employees.
8. "Health care provider" means an individual:
 - a. holding a physician's and surgeon's certificate or an osteopathic physician's and surgeon's certificate; or
 - b. duly licensed as a physician, surgeon, or osteopathic physician or surgeon in another state or jurisdiction, who directly treats or supervises the treatment of the serious health condition; or
 - c. who has been determined by the United States Secretary of Labor to be capable of providing health care services under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.
9. "Industrial Accident and Illness" means a work related injury or illness.
10. "Intermittent Leave" means a leave taken in separate blocks of time due to a single illness or injury and may include leave periods from one hour or more to several weeks.
11. "Parent" means a biological, foster, or adoptive parent, a step-parent, a legal guardian or someone who stood in loco parentis to an employee when the employee was a child.
12. "Reduced Leave Schedule" means a leave schedule that reduces an employee's usual number of working hours per day or per week.
13. "Serious health condition" means an illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition which involves either of the following:
 - a. Inpatient care (overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or
 - b. Continuing treatment or continuing supervision by a health care provider.

14. "Sick leave" means days for which an employee is paid but is not required to work because of illness or injury.
15. "Spouse" means a husband or wife according to California law.

D. Eligibility For Family Care And Medical Leave

Employees are required to have completed more than twelve (12) months of continuous service with the District to be eligible for family care and medical leave. Continuous service consists of full-time or part-time employment for the number of months customarily worked by employees in that job classification. If an employee separates from service after attaining more than one year of continuous service and is subsequently reemployed by the District, the employee is not eligible for family care and medical leave until he or she completes another year of service. Employees are required to have completed 1,250 hours of service in the twelve months preceding the leave for eligibility.

E. Right To Family Care And Medical Leave

Subject to the terms and conditions stated in this policy, an eligible employee shall be granted an unpaid family care and medical leave for up to a total of twelve work weeks in a school year (July 1 through June 30), after making a request for such leave in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

A request for family care and medical leave must comply with the applicable notice requirements described below. Appropriate certification as described in Section G is also required.

F. Requests For Family Care and Medical Leave

1. If the employee learns of facts necessitating a family care and medical leave more than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the time the leave is needed, the employee shall provide written notice to the District immediately. A minimum of thirty calendar days written notice is required.
2. If the employee learns of facts necessitating the family and medical care leave less than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the time the leave is needed, the employee shall provide written notice to the District as soon as possible. The employee is required to provide the District with written notice within five (5) working days of learning of the need for the leave.
3. If the employee's need for the leave is foreseeable due to a planned medical treatment or planned supervision of the employee, or that of a child, parent or spouse with a serious health condition, the employee shall consult with the District regarding the scheduling of the treatment or supervision so as to prevent undue disruption to the operations of the District. Any scheduling of treatment or supervision shall be subject to the approval of the health care provider of the individual with the serious health condition. In any event, thirty (30) calendar days written notice is required.

G. Certification Of Serious Health Condition From Health Care Provider

1. If the employee is requesting the leave to care for a child, parent or spouse with a serious health condition, the District may require certification of the serious medical condition by the individual's health care provider.
 - a. The certification shall include:
 - (1) the date on which the serious health condition commenced;
 - (2) the probable duration of the condition;
 - (3) an estimate of the time that the health care provider believes the employee needs to care for the individual requiring the care.
 - (4) a statement that the serious health condition warrants the participation of the employee to provide care for the employee's child, parent or spouse.
 - b. If additional leave is requested beyond the period stated in the certification, the District may require the employee to obtain recertification in accordance with the procedures set forth above.
2. If the employee is requesting the leave for his or her own serious medical condition, the District may require certification of the serious medical condition by his or her health care provider.
 - a. The certification shall include:
 - (1) the date on which the serious health condition commenced;
 - (2) the probable duration of the condition;
 - (3) a statement that, due to the serious health condition, the employee is unable to perform the functions of his or her position.
 - b. If additional leave is requested beyond the period stated in the certification, the District may require the employee to obtain recertification in accordance with the procedures set forth above.
 - c. If the District has reason to doubt the validity of the certification, the District may require the employee to undergo an examination by a health care provider of the District's choice to obtain a second opinion. If the second opinion differs from the opinion in the original certification, the District may require the employee undergo a third examination conducted by a health care provider jointly selected by the District and the employee. The third opinion shall be binding on the District and the employee. All subsequent opinions obtained after the initial certification shall be at District expense.

- d. Prior to returning to work after an employee has been granted family care and medical leave for his or her own serious medical condition, the District may require the employee to obtain certification from his or her health care provider that the employee is able to resume his or her duties.

H. Right To Reinstatement

1. In general, an employee returning from a family care and medical leave shall be assigned to the position he or she occupied prior to the leave, or an equivalent position with equivalent terms and conditions of employment, including employment benefits such as pay, working conditions, privileges, and status. Additionally, an employee's use of family care and medical leave will not result in the loss of any other employment benefit that the employee earned or was entitled to before using the leave.

I. Intermittent Or Reduced Schedule Leave

1. Leave taken because of the serious health condition of the employee or the employee's spouse, child or parent, may be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule leave when medically necessary. Intermittent or reduced schedule leave shall not result in a reduction of the total amount of family care and medical leave to which the employee is entitled pursuant to state and federal law. Leave taken because of the birth of a child or placement of a child with the employee, shall not be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule leave unless expressly agreed to by the District and the employee.
2. If an employee requests intermittent leave, or a reduced schedule leave, the District may require the employee to transfer temporarily to an available alternative position. The alternative position must be one which the employee is qualified for, which has equivalent pay and benefits, and better accommodates the recurring periods of leave than the employee's regular position.

J. Terms Of Family Care And Medical Leave

1. Leave taken pursuant to this policy is unpaid leave. However, an eligible employee may elect, or the District may require the employee, to substitute accrued paid sick leave, differential pay sick leave or other paid leave for any part of the twelve week period. Nothing in this policy shall require the District to provide paid sick leave or paid medical leave in any situation in which the District would not otherwise provide any such paid leave.

In the event the employee elects or is required to use sick leave, the accumulated sick leave shall be used first. After the accumulated sick leave is exhausted, the employee may elect or the District may require the employee, to use any available differential pay sick leave during the period of the family care and medical leave.

Because family care and medical leave is limited to a duration of twelve (12) work weeks, it is unlikely the employee will run out of differential pay sick leave within the duration of the family care and medical leave for a particular individual serious health condition.

2. During the period of family care and medical leave, the District shall maintain coverage under any group health plan (as defined in Section 5000(b)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) for a maximum of twelve (12) work weeks. The coverage shall be under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had continued in employment for the duration of the leave. The District may collect the amount of premiums paid by the District from the employee if the employee fails to return from leave after the contemplated time period for a reason other than the continuation, recurrence or onset of a serious health condition.
3. During the period of the family care and medical leave, the employee is entitled to participate in pension and retirement plans (hereinafter, "retirement plans") and supplemental employment benefit plans to the same extent and under the same conditions as would apply to any other unpaid personal leave granted by the District for any reason other than family care and medical necessity.
The District is not required to make plan payments to any retirement plan or to count the leave period for purposes of "time accrued" under any such retirement plan during the unpaid portion of the leave period. However, during the portion of the leave period wherein the employee has elected or the District has required the employee to utilize accrued vacation or other paid leave, applicable payments will be made to the retirement plan. In addition, accrued vacation or other accrued paid time off shall count towards "time accrued" under the retirement plan in the same manner as if the employee had utilized the paid leave other than for family care and medical leave. Employees are allowed to continue making contributions to their retirement plan, in accordance with the terms of the plan, during the unpaid portion of the leave.
4. The employee shall maintain employee status during the period of the family care and medical leave. The leave shall not constitute a break in service for purposes of seniority and/or longevity.
5. The employee returning from family care and medical leave shall return with no less seniority than the employee had when the leave commenced for purposes of layoff, recall, promotion, job assignment and seniority-related benefits, such as vacation.
6. Other than as set forth in this policy, the District shall not refuse to hire, discharge, fine, suspend, expel or discriminate in any fashion against any individual who:
 - a. utilizes the family care and medical leave set forth in this policy;
 - b. gives information or testimony regarding the employee's own family care and medical leave, or another employee's family care and medical leave, in any inquiry or proceeding related to family care and medical leave.

K. Effect of Family Care and Medical Leave on Pregnancy Disability Leave

1. Leave Available

Leave taken under a pregnancy disability policy runs concurrently with family care and medical leave under federal law, but not family care and medical leave under California law. Consequently, an eligible employee may take a pregnancy disability leave of up to four (4) months and a family care and medical leave of up to twelve (12) work weeks, for a combination of four (4) months plus twelve (12) weeks (approximately seven (7) months).

In order to be eligible for a combination pregnancy disability/family care and medical leave, pregnant employees must meet the eligibility requirements set forth at Section D above.

2. Compensation During Leave

Leave necessitated by pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth and recovery therefrom shall be treated the same as sick leave. Consequently, a classified employee shall utilize sick leave and any available differential pay sick leave during the period of the pregnancy disability/family care and medical leave.

The accumulated sick leave shall be used first. After the accumulated leave is exhausted, the employee shall use any available differential pay sick leave.

The employee may also elect, or the District may require the employee to utilize any other paid leave during the pregnancy disability/family care medical leave. Nothing in this policy shall require the District to provide paid sick leave or paid medical leave in any situation in which the District would not otherwise provide any such paid leave.

3. Benefits During Leave

The District shall maintain coverage under any group health plan (as defined in Section 5000(b)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) for employees who are eligible for combination pregnancy disability/family care and medical leave for the amount of time the employee utilizes accumulated and differential pay sick leave. In addition, the District shall maintain coverage for a maximum of twelve (12) work weeks of unpaid leave taken pursuant to this policy. In some instances, the District may recover premiums it paid to maintain health coverage for an employee who fails to return to work following a combination pregnancy disability/family care and medical leave.

Employees on a combination pregnancy disability/family care and medical leave whose paid coverage ceases in accordance with this policy, may continue their group health insurance coverage through the District in conjunction with federal COBRA guidelines by making monthly payments to the District for the amount of the relevant premium. Employees should contact their supervisor or the District Office for further information.

4. Reinstatement

In general, employees returning from a combination pregnancy disability/family care and medical leave shall be reinstated pursuant to the reinstatement rights set forth in Section H.

However, if an employee returning from pregnancy disability leave is unable to perform the essential functions of the job because of a physical or mental condition, the District's obligations to that employee may be governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

L. Effect of Family Care and Medical Leave on Industrial Accident or Illness Disability Leave

1. Leave Available

Leave taken under any industrial accident or illness disability policy runs concurrently with family care and medical leave under both federal and state law.

2. Benefits During Leave

The District shall maintain coverage under any group health plan (as defined in Section 5000(b)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) for employees who are eligible for combination industrial injury or illness disability/family care and medical leave for a maximum of twelve (12) work weeks. In some instances, the District may recover premiums it paid to maintain health coverage for an employee who fails to return to work following a combination industrial injury or illness disability/family care and medical leave.

Employees on a combination industrial injury or illness disability/family care and medical leave whose paid coverage ceases after 12 work weeks, may continue their group health insurance coverage through the District in conjunction with federal COBRA guidelines by making monthly payments to the District for the amount of the relevant premium. Employees should contact their supervisor or the District Office for further information.

3. Reinstatement

In general, employees returning from a combination industrial injury or illness disability/family care and medical leave shall be reinstated pursuant to the reinstatement rights set forth in Section H.

However, if an employee returning from industrial injury or illness disability leave is unable to perform the essential functions of the job because of a physical or mental condition, the District's obligations to that employee may be governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Legal References:

Family Medical Leave Act of 1993

California Family Rights Act of 1991, as amended October 5, 1993

Date Policy Adopted By The Board: September 25, 2001