

Parents in the Workplace

A Parental Leave Resource Guide for Supervisors

Introduction

One of your employees has just announced that she is expecting a baby. Another mentions adopting or fostering a child. Addressing your operational staffing needs so that work can be accomplished during planned absences is an important part of your job. An awareness of your employer's legal obligations, human resource policy, and parental benefits are equally important. You also want to show your support for the employee and help them plan for a positive absence and return to work. The purpose of this Guide is to help you feel more capable and comfortable about the conversations you will need to have with human resources and with your employees.

The Supervisor's Role

Policy: Human Resources doesn't expect you to be an expert in policy and employment law, but you should be familiar with the following state publications:

- [Policy 1.25. Hours of Work Mandatory Breaks for Nursing Mothers](#)
- [Breaks for Nursing Mothers - Resource Guide](#)
- [Policy 4.20 Family and Medical Leave](#)
- [Policy 4.21 Parental Leave](#)
- [Policy 4.55 Traditional Sick Leave](#)
- [Policy 4.57 Virginia Sickness & Disability Program](#)
- [Parents in the Workplace – Resource Guide for Working Parents](#) (Add link once posted)

Prior to a Parental Leave of Absence:

- It's important to maintain the employees' engagement while respecting their privacy.
- Remember that the employee is responsible for advising you of an upcoming extended absence, and that it is *their* responsibility to decide if, when, and what specific information about the absence is to be shared with others.
- It's best to engage the employee as early as possible, ideally face to face.
- Sharing in the employee's excitement demonstrates that you and your agency support a family-friendly office culture.
- Schedule follow-up meetings with the employee to discuss time-off, scheduling, and short-term disability and/or parental leave policy matters as necessary.
- Request the employee's input on ongoing duties and upcoming assignments, and for their suggestions about reassignments during the absence.



- Acknowledge that work and scheduling flexibility is important. Employees may need to use leave to meet with attorneys, courts, and counselors, or to attend prenatal appointments.
- Consult regularly with your human resource officer, and encourage employees to do the same if there are questions about benefits eligibility.
- Be mindful of any special needs that an employee's pregnancy may present. This may include safety concerns, physical demands, the need for more frequent breaks, an increase in teleworking options, or the need for an adjustment or changes in equipment while she is still working.
- You'll need to prepare the employee's co-workers for transitional or temporary assignments. Include them in discussions for a more positive, team-based outcome. Having ongoing, honest, and open conversations with your team members during this period helps ensure the most positive and productive experience for everyone.
- Make plans for staff coverage prior to the absence. Contact human resources if you think it may be necessary to add temporary staff.

During the Absence:

- While your employee is away on leave, keep in touch via an occasional email, text, or by phone; whatever you have agreed between you is fine.
- Discuss if and how your employee would like to be informed of any major developments, updates, and day to day operational plans while on leave and what information may be shared with co-workers.
- It's important to let the employee know that they are missed.
- Provide highlights of what's going on at the office, but remember that the employee is on leave. Do not discuss work assignments, and respect the employee's schedule, especially if a newborn is in the household.

Return to Work:

- Plan to connect with your employee before their return to work to discuss how they would like to make the transition. This helps ensure things go as smoothly as possible.
- Remain open to suggestions that might make the transition easier.
- Celebrate the employee's return to work.
- Arrange for co-workers who have been carrying the employee's responsibilities to bring the returning employee up-to-date on assignments.

Being there to support employees through transitional phases in their personal lives will enhance engagement, strengthen teams, and increase productivity.