

## Leave of Absence Policy

### PURPOSE

In an effort to recognize the need of employees who require time off in addition to other types of leave, Grand Traverse County may consider an unpaid personal leave of absence without pay for up to a maximum of 30 days, when justified by compelling personal circumstances.

### Guidelines

Any time away from work that is not covered by pay from an accumulated leave bank or otherwise approved for pay, including partial days, shall be considered a Leave of Absence. Leaves of Absence of less than thirty (30) days require the approval of the department head. All requests for leave over thirty (30) days must be approved by the Department Head and HR Department unless required by law or otherwise stated in this Section. Such leave shall be without pay unless otherwise provided below.

Only a regular full-time or regular part-time employee who has completed six months of service may be granted a leave of absence of over 30 days for sickness, disability, educational development, or other good and sufficient reasons. Such leave shall not exceed one year. All leave requests shall be in writing and state the reason, the exact date on which the leave is to begin and the date of return to work. Failure to return on the agreed date or extension thereof may result in termination. The employee shall not return prior to the expiration of his/her leave unless agreed to by the department head.

Employees who take leave without pay in excess of 30 days shall have their seniority accrual frozen while on leave, effective on the first day following the 30 days. Therefore, their service date (for longevity, seniority, and vacation accrual) shall be moved forward by an amount equivalent to this length of time. They shall also have their anniversary date (for consideration of step increase) delayed by the same length of time. Leaves without pay in excess of 30 days will require the employee to reimburse the County for their benefits to continue during said leave. If the employee drops their insurance benefits they will be subject to the enrollment waiting period of the particular insurance should the employee desire to pick up coverage upon return.

Upon returning to work, the employee shall have the right to displace any employee with less service in the same classification in the department in which they worked at the time their leave of absence was granted unless otherwise stated at the time the leave is approved.

Nothing in this policy shall conflict with or limit employee's rights under the Family Medical Leave Act.

**Educational Leave** - An employee who wishes to further his/her education in order to enhance his/her performance to improve their chances for career advances with the County may request in writing an educational leave for up to one year. The employee who is granted an educational leave may return to a job in their same classification, however their work assignment may change.

**Non-Duty Disability Leave** - Leaves requested due to illness or medical disability (including maternity) must be accompanied by a medical doctor's certificate that the employee is unable to work and the reason therefore. Employees returning to work shall submit to Human Resources a doctor's

statement indicating the employee's ability to return to the job. The employee may request to receive wages through the County's short term disability program, accumulated vacation, annual personal leave and/or frozen sick bank for this purpose under the guidelines set forth in this policy. During a pregnancy, if an employee is aware that her and/or her unborn child's health is endangered by her job, she shall immediately make that fact known in writing to her department head. If the leave qualifies under the FMLA, it will be counted toward the twelve weeks.

**Parental Leave** - An employee may request in writing a parental leave up to six months to begin at birth or date of adoption of his /her child. Accumulated vacation, personal or unpaid leave may be used for this purpose. This leave may run concurrently with a disability leave in the case of childbirth. Such leaves are to be approved by the County Administrator, who shall do so if the needs of the County can be met. This leave will be counted toward the twelve weeks allowed by the FMLA.

**Military Leave** - Any employee who enters active service of the Armed Forces of the United States shall receive a military leave of absence without pay for the period of such duty. An employee returning from military service shall be reemployed in accordance with applicable federal and state statutes, as long as application for reemployment is made within 90 days of his or her discharge.

An employee who is a member of the National Guard or Reserves who is called for defense training shall be entitled to a leave of absence in addition to his/her vacation not to exceed two calendar weeks. During this leave, and upon presentation of documentation of their gross wages with the Reserves, they may receive pay for the difference between their regular gross pay, such pay not to exceed two (2) calendar weeks.

Note: This policy may differ for those employees who are members of recognized unions, organizations, or associations. Any questions related to the content of this policy, or its interpretation, should be directed to Human Resources.

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