



Policy

POL.COR.24.06 Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave Policy

Policy Type: Corporate Policy (Approved by Council)
Date Approved: September 9, 2024
Department: Administration
Staff Report: FAF.10.197, FAF.23.051, FAF.24.094

Policy Statement

The Town of The Blue Mountains (Town) is committed to promoting and maintaining high levels of attendance in the workplace. It is acknowledged that there may be times when an employee will need to be away from work either due to physical or mental health concerns, non-occupational illness, injury, medical emergency, an Urgent Matter, or a family member's illness, injury, medical emergency, or an Urgent Matter concerning a family member.

Purpose

To establish clear processes for employees to follow in the event of an absence due to physical or mental health concerns, illness, injury, medical emergencies, or Urgent Matters, whether personal or family-related.

Application

This policy applies to all non-union employees who have worked more than seven (7) days. Work-related injuries or illnesses are covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

Definitions

ESA: means the Employment Standards Act, 2000 – provides the minimum standards for most employees within Ontario. It sets out the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers in most Ontario workplaces.

Family Responsibility Leave: means a leave due to an illness, injury, medical emergency, or an Urgent Matter relating to a dependant or family member as defined by the ESA.

Health and Wellness Leave: means a leave due to Personal Health and Wellness, non-occupational illness, injury, or medical emergency. This entitlement also includes sick leave under ESA.

Inclement Weather: means abnormal climatic conditions making travel to/or from work unsafe or unreasonable (e.g., blizzard, hail, high winds).

Personal Emergency Leave: Referred to as Family Responsibility Leave under ESA, means a leave due to illness, injury, medical emergency, or Urgent Matter relating to the following family members:

- Spouse (includes both married and unmarried couples, of the same or opposite genders);
- Parent, step-parent, foster parent, child, step-child, foster child, grandparent, step-grandparent, grandchild or step-grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse;
- Spouse of the employee's child;
- Brother or sister of the employee;
- Relative of the employee who is dependent on the employee for care or assistance.

Personal Health and Wellness: includes the following:

- Physical Health: Time off for medical appointments, treatments, surgeries, and recovery from illness or injury;
- Mental Health: Time off for attending therapy sessions, mental health treatment, and taking personal days for mental well-being;
- Preventive Health: Time for preventive care such as annual check-ups, vaccinations, and health screenings;
- Wellness Activities: Time for counseling, or other wellness programs.

Urgent Matter: An event that is unplanned or out of the employee's control, and can cause serious negative consequences, including emotional harm, if not responded to.

Procedures

1. The Town will grant each employee the equivalent of up to nine (9) Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave paid days based on the number of months worked annually and their regular weekly hours for the purpose of:
 - Personal Health and Wellness, non-occupational illness and/or injury, medical appointments or emergencies;

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- Illness, injury, medical appointments or emergencies related to a family member;
 - An Urgent Matter or event that is unplanned or out of the employee's control;
 - Quarantine due to contagious disease.
2. Paid Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave days will be prorated based on the employee's start date.
 3. In addition, employees are entitled to up to three (3) unpaid days for Sick Leave and up to three (3) unpaid days for Family Responsibility Leave entitlements under ESA. These days are not prorated for the year.
 4. An employee who will be absent from work or late for their scheduled start time must contact their direct supervisor. This notice may be provided in writing via e-mail or phone call by the employee or a member of their family/household. In all instances, employees should provide as much notice as possible when they will be absent or late in order to allow management to arrange proper coverage.
 5. If all paid Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave days and ESA entitlements are used within a year, any additional time required is subject to approval by the direct supervisor. The employee may utilize eligible entitlement banks, such as vacation or banked overtime prior to taking unpaid time.
 6. Unused paid Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave entitlements shall not be carried forward from year to year.
 7. Earned, unused paid Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave entitlements are not payable upon termination of employment.
 8. All staff may utilize two (2) days per year of their paid Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave allotment if they are unable to attend work due to Inclement Weather. These days shall be taken in hourly increments.
 9. The Town may require an employee who is absent for three (3) or more consecutive working days to supply evidence that is reasonable in the circumstances. What will be reasonable in the circumstances will depend on all the facts of the situation, such as the duration of the leave, whether there is a pattern of absences, whether any evidence is available, and the cost of the evidence. This may include a medical note if the employee is taking the leave because of personal illness, injury or medical emergency and should include the duration or expected duration of the absence if applicable. Employees have a responsibility to make every effort to ensure they return to work in a state of health and well-being that will enable them to perform their job to the best of their abilities.

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10. Permanent Full-Time Employees using seven (7) consecutive Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave days due to personal non-occupational illness, injury, or medical emergency may be able to apply for Short-Term Disability benefits.
11. Medical documentation will be required by the Town's benefit provider for a Short-Term Benefits application and a Return to Work Form will be required for extended illnesses to ensure an employee is fit to return to work.
12. The Town reserves the right to require mandatory medical documentation or proof of entitlement for employees who require Health, Wellness, and Personal Emergency Leave in excess of ten (10) days per year.
13. Special circumstances may be approved by the CAO and Director in consultation with the Manager of Human Resources.

References and Related Policies

- Government of Ontario Guide to the Employment Standards Act:
 - [Sick Leave](#)
 - [Family Responsibility Leave](#)
- [POL.COR.19.05 Inclement Weather Policy](#)
- HR Resource for Leaders and Employees - Sick Leave Guideline

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with through the Town's progressive discipline policy.

Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed once per term of Council or as required due to legislative change.