

Category: 300

Number: 364

Subject: **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE POLICY**

1. **PURPOSE:** It is the purpose of this policy to establish uniform guidelines and rules for those employees who elect to apply or otherwise qualify, for leave in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (29 USC 2601).
2. **AUTHORITY:** The Saginaw County Board of Commissioners.
3. **APPLICATION:** The rules and regulations herein set forth apply to all employees paid by Saginaw County, pursuant to Policy #301.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** The Controller/CAO of Saginaw County and/or his/her designee shall be responsible for the implementation of this policy. It shall be the responsibility of the Controller's Office and Department Heads to administer this policy.
5. **PRELIMINARY STATEMENT:** Saginaw County shall administer this policy in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act and its accompanying regulations, set forth in 29 CFR 825.100, et seq. Thus, although this policy sets forth a summary of the requirements, process and procedure regarding employees' use of leave under applicable circumstances, Saginaw County shall administer this policy in accordance with the Act and its regulations.
6. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - 6.1 **Serious Health Condition.** Is defined as stated in 29 CFR 825.113, but is generally regarded as an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job, or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities. Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.
7. **POLICY:**
 - 7.1 **Eligibility.** Saginaw County's family and medical leave policy is available to employees with at least 12 months of service and who have worked at least 1,250 hours within the preceding 12 month period, so long as the County has 50 employees within 75 miles. If eligible, an employee may be able to take unpaid leave as indicated below during the calendar year (based on a 12 month rolling calendar).

7.1.1 Basic Leave Entitlement. FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave to eligible employees for the following reasons:

7.1.1.1 To care for the employee's child after birth (within the first 12 months after birth);

7.1.1.2 The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care (within the first 12 months of placement);

7.1.1.3 To care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition;

7.1.1.4 For a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job; or

7.1.1.5 For incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or child birth.

7.1.2 Military Family Leave Entitlements. FMLA requires covered employers to provide leave in the following circumstances relating to military service:

7.1.2.1 Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or call to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12 week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualified exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings.

7.1.2.2 Eligible employees (spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member) may take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered service member during a single 12 month period. A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious illness or injury incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform his or her duties for which the service member is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

7.2 Application and Approval. Qualified employees seeking to take leave in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act shall contact the Personnel Division of the Controller's Office. Staff will discuss the need for leave with the employee and will provide the employee with a Notice of Eligibility and Notice of Rights and Responsibilities within the timeframe indicated within the Act. The Notice of Rights and Responsibilities will detail

additional information an employee must provide in order for a determination to be made if the absence qualifies as FMLA Leave. If sufficient information is not provided in a timely manner, an employee's leave may be denied.

After review of any additional documentation required in the Rights and Responsibilities Notice, a representative from the Personnel Division shall indicate if the leave request has been approved or denied by providing the employee with a Designation Notice in the timeframe indicated within the Act.

7.3 Employer/Employee Responsibilities.

7.3.1 Employee Responsibilities. When requesting leave, the employee must provide the Saginaw County Personnel Department with at least 30 days advance notice when the need for leave is foreseeable. When 30 days notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable and generally must comply with the employer's normal call-in procedures. Employees must provide sufficient information for the employer to determine if the leave may qualify for the FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions, the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Employees must also inform the employer if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA Leave was previously taken or certified. Employees also may be required to provide a certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave.

7.3.1.1 Certification. Certification will be required if the leave request is for the employee's own serious health condition, to care for a family member's serious health condition, or for a qualifying exigency or serious illness or injury of a covered service member for military family medical leave. Failure to provide the requested certification in a timely manner (within 15 calendar days) may result in denial of the leave until certification is provided.

Consistent with other County policies and procedures and/or terms set forth in applicable collective bargaining agreements, the County may request and, to the extent allowed by law, require a fitness-for-duty certification prior to reinstatement to ensure the employee is able to perform the essential functions of the employee's job. Qualifying FMLA Leave will not be counted as an absence under the applicable department's attendance policy.

As allowed by the Act, the County, at its expense, may require an examination by a second health care provider designated by the County of Saginaw if the County has a reasonable question regarding the medical certification provided by the employee. Or, in accordance with the manner prescribed in the Act, the County may request authentication or clarification from the employee's health care provider as to an issue(s) relating to the provided medical certification.

The County may also seek re-certification of a serious medical condition in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act.

7.3.2 Employer Responsibilities. Covered Employers must inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under FMLA. If they are, the notice must specify any additional information required as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If they are not eligible, the employer must provide a reason for the ineligibility.

Covered employers must inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's leave entitlement. If the employer determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the employer must notify the employee.

7.4 Benefits and Restoration. The County of Saginaw will maintain health care benefits under any "group health plan" and life insurance for the employee while on FMLA Leave on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work, including that the employee is responsible for paying the normal monthly contribution. All other benefits cease to accrue during an unpaid portion of the leave. Use of FMLA Leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave.

As allowed by the Act, employees must use any personal time off (PTO) to the extent available, subject to allowance for a 40 hour PTO bank limitation (see Section 7.4.1), during this leave period. Absences in excess of these accumulated days will be treated as leave without pay. Upon return from leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms.

7.4.1 40 Hour PTO Bank Limitation. Prior to beginning a FMLA Leave, upon written request to the Personnel Division or authorized officials, an employee may retain up to forty (40) PTO hours-banked time by opting for unpaid time once their PTO bank reaches that level of time.

7.5 Intermittent Leave. An employee does not need to use FMLA Leave in one block. When medically necessary, employees can take intermittent FMLA or reduced leave schedule leave. The County will work with employees to arrange reduced work schedules or leaves of absence in order to care for a family member's serious health condition or their own serious health condition. However, employees who are on approved intermittent leave must still, when practicable, give notice of any and all prearranged leaves, including, but not limited to, scheduled doctors appointments, treatment times, etc., which will result in the employee's absence from his/her department for any period of time. Employees must also make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatments so not to unduly disrupt the employer's operations.

Leave due to qualifying exigencies may also be taken on an intermittent basis. Leave because of the birth or adoption of a child must be completed within the 12 month period beginning on the date of birth or placement of the child. Leave taken after the birth of a healthy child or placement of a healthy child for adoption or foster care may not be taken intermittently without special permission from the Department Head or applicable Elected Official.

7.6 Applicability of Other Laws. When state and local laws offer more protection or benefits, the protection or benefits provided by those laws will apply.

7.7 Accordance with the Law. This policy shall be interpreted, and construed in accordance, with the Family and Medical Leave Act.

7.8 Any employee who is off on a FMLA Leave and is determined to be acting in a manner, means, or activity not related to the leave can be disciplined up to and including discharge.

7.9 Unlawful Acts by Employers and Enforcement Mechanisms. The FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under FMLA or to discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to FMLA. If an employee feels they are being discriminated against, they may file a complaint in accordance with County Policy #322, Discrimination and Sexual Harassment.

Concerns or complaints about FMLA Leave can be directed to Personnel, or an employee may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor, or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer. FMLA does not affect any Federal or State law prohibiting discrimination, or supersede any State or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES: None

9. CONTROLLER/CAO LEGAL COUNSEL REVIEW: The Controller/CAO has determined that this policy as submitted to the Board of Commissioners contains the necessary substance in order to carry out the purpose of the policy. County Civil Counsel has determined that this policy as submitted contains content that appears to be legal activities of the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners.

Approved as to Substance:
Saginaw County Controller/CAO

Approved as to Legal Content:
Saginaw County Civil Counsel

ADOPTED: October 25, 2005

AMENDED: August 12, 2008; January 20, 2009