

Employee Leave Frequently Asked Questions

I need to take leave of absence. What steps do I need to follow?

- Please discuss your need for leave with your immediate supervisor/principal.
- If this is a planned leave, such as surgery or childbirth, please provide a six to eight week notice, if possible.
- Please visit the Employee Leave webpage at <https://www.ucps.k12.nc.us/Page/5856>. Print and complete the Request for Leave of Absence Application along with doctor's certification (WH-380 E or WH-380 F). Submit leave of absence application and medical paperwork to your Benefits Coordinator.
- Please contact your Payroll Specialist to discuss your available leave balance and how it will be applied to your leave of absence if approved.
- The Executive Director of Payroll/Benefits will review your Leave Application and supporting documentation for approval.
- Your Benefits Coordinator will notify your Payroll Specialist upon approval. A leave calendar will be prepared for you and you will be sent a Voluntary Shared Leave packet if applicable.
- Your Benefits Coordinator will send a confirmation letter to you and your supervisor. You will also receive a copy of your leave calendar from your Payroll Specialist.
- If you are sent a Voluntary Shared Leave Application, please complete the form (including having your supervisor sign it) and return to your Benefits Coordinator.
- The Voluntary Shared Leave Application will be forwarded to your Payroll Specialist once approved and your request for shared leave donations will be distributed based on the method you elected on your application (system-wide is the default). Revisions to your leave calendar will be based on the donations received.

What is FMLA?

- The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave per year. (Does not Provide Pay)

How do I qualify for FMLA?

- You are eligible if you meet both criteria:
 - Work a combined 1 year with UCPS (in the last 7 years).
 - Work 1,250 hours in the 12 months preceding need for leave.

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When would I need to use FMLA?

- FMLA covers eligible employees for the following reasons:
 - for incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or child birth;
 - to care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care;
 - to care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition;
 - for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.

Do I have to use FMLA in a block of time?

- FMLA can be used as needed (intermittently) or for a block of time.

I worked at another NC Local Education Agency (LEA) last year and began working with UCPS earlier this year. Does that count as one year worked?

- No, each LEA is considered a separate employer under FMLA. The year must have been worked with UCPS.

Do paid leave and paid holidays count toward the 1,250 hours?

- No, only hours actually worked are used to determine if 1,250 hours have been met.

Does FMLA pay me when I am on leave?

- FMLA provides unpaid, job protected leave for up to 12 weeks for covered reasons.
- You have the option of using your earned leave in accordance with NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) guidelines.
- Your Payroll Specialist will assist you with determining how much leave you have available to use.

What else does FMLA do for me?

- FMLA will pay the employer cost of group health insurance and group term life insurance for up to 12 weeks for qualified reasons.

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May I still take a leave of absence even if I am not eligible for FMLA?

- You may still take leave for a qualifying reason.
- You will still be able to use earned leave as outlined by NCDPI.

How long can I take leave after I have had a baby?

- All full-time or part-time permanent employees may take a leave of absence without pay for up to one calendar year from the date of birth or adoption to care for a newborn child or a newly adopted child.

Does UCPS provide maternity pay?

- Paid Parental Leave is available for eligible employees, up to eight weeks after giving birth to a child; and up to four weeks after other qualifying events (e.g., paternity leave, adoption, fostering a child, becoming a legal guardian).
- Accrued sick leave can be used due to pregnancy, childbirth, or postnatal recovery.
- Employees, including teachers, may use annual vacation leave, personal leave (if applicable) or leave without pay to care for a newborn child or for a child placed with the employee for adoption or foster care. Use of annual vacation leave for this purpose is not limited to days when students are not scheduled to be in attendance. An employee may also use up to 30 days of earned sick leave to care for a child placed with the employee for adoption.

How do I apply for Paid Parental Leave?

- On page 2 of the Request for Leave of Absence Form, you will select the box beside of the Paid Parental Leave under: During My Leave, I would like to use the following benefits, as one of your choices. You can advise on the form how and when you would like to use the Paid Parental Leave.
- Your Benefits Coordinator will let you know if you qualify for Paid Parental Leave after review of the form.
- Your Payroll Specialist will send you a calendar indicating how the Paid Parental is being used during your leave of absence.

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Who qualifies for Paid Parental Leave?

- Any public-school employee hired to fill a permanent position on a full-time, part-time, or time-limited basis and who has, at the time of the qualifying event, been in pay status with a North Carolina PSU without a break in service, and been in “pay status” for at least 1,040 hours within the previous 12-month period. Temporary employees and independent contractors are not eligible.

How do I add my baby to my health coverage?

- Please contact the Finance Benefits Accountant within 30 days of the birth of your child.

What happens if I am on unpaid leave?

- If you are on unpaid leave, you will receive a bill for insurance premiums. The amount due will depend on how much of your leave is unpaid and if you are still covered by FMLA.

Do I have to keep my insurance while on leave?

- No. Please contact the Finance Benefits Accountant within 30 days of a family status change if you chose to cancel coverage. You can cancel some or all of your insurance.
- Please note, if you cancel dental insurance, your one year waiting period will start over if you enroll back in the plan.

If I cancel insurance, will I be automatically enrolled once I return to work?

- No. Please contact your Finance Benefits Accountant for instructions to enroll within 30 days of returning to work.

My job requires a substitute and my doctor has written me out for several months. Can I use my earned annual leave?

- You may request to use your annual leave due to catastrophic illness of self and/or parental leave by selecting annual leave on the Request for Leave of Absence Application and submitting your request to your Benefits Coordinator.

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I do not have enough earned leave available for the time my doctor has written me out of work due to a serious medical condition. Do I have any options?

- You may apply for Voluntary Shared Leave.
- Your Voluntary Shared Leave Form will be forwarded to you from your Payroll Specialist if applicable. Complete the application, obtain your Supervisor's signature and submit it to your Benefits Coordinator.
- Please note that voluntary shared leave can only be used during the 60 calendar day waiting period if you are eligible to receive benefits under the NC Disability Income Plan.

When would I be eligible for short-term disability?

- If you have purchased a Colonial disability policy, please contact Colonial directly. You can also download forms from Colonial's website. UCPS does not have access to any Colonial policy information. Your Payroll Specialist will complete employer section of Colonial claims.
- If you want to apply for disability under the NC Disability Income Plan, you must have one year of contributory service to NC Retirement Systems Division in order to be eligible.
- Your Benefits Coordinator will keep track of how long you have been out and provide a packet to you once you have been out close to 60 calendar days.

What do I need to do if my doctor has not released me to return to work?

- Please contact your immediate supervisor as soon you know your situation has changed.
- If your absence has been extended beyond your approved return to work date, please submit a Request for Leave Extension Application. You must complete the form, obtain your supervisor's signature and submit to your Benefits Coordinator along with the supporting doctor's note indicating your time out has been extended.
- The Executive Director of Payroll/Benefits will review the Extended Leave Request Form and your Benefits Coordinator will send a confirmation letter to you and your Supervisor along with a revised calendar, if approved.

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What do I need to do if I want to return to work early?

- If you are currently written out by your doctor, he/she will need to complete the Physician's Release to Return to Work Form sent with your leave approval email releasing you to return to work.
- Please send a copy of the completed Physician's Release to Return to Work Form to your Benefits Coordinator.
- The Benefits Department will review the employee's return to work documentation. If approved, the Benefits Coordinator will issue the employee a return to work authorization email. The Bookkeeper and Principal/Supervisor will be copied on the email.