OHR GUIDE TO: **Parental Leave**

This guide provides an overview of the resources available to employees for pregnancy/ childbirth, adoption, surrogacy, and foster care purposes.

Making a Plan

As soon as practicable after you have determined you have a need for parental leave, OHR recommends preparing a leave plan and sitting down with your supervisor to review. Leave requests must be made to and approved by your supervisor.

Leave Types

Annual Leave

- Can be used for bonding with a healthy child, as well as sick leave purposes.
- Requires supervisory approval.

Sick Leave

- Can be used for childbirth, recuperation, and taking care of a sick child after birth.
- Employees are entitled to use accrued sick leave for pregnancy and childbirth, to care for a family member who is incapacitated due to pregnancy or childbirth, and for adoption or surrogacy purposes.
- In the case of adoption or surrogacy, can be used for: appointments with attorneys, court proceedings, any required travel, any periods of time during which the employee is ordered or required by the court to take time off from work to care for the child, and any other activities necessary to allow the adoption to proceed.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

- To be eligible, must have been a federal employee for 12 months.
- FMLA, an unpaid leave status, provides up to 12 weeks of job protection for the birth of a son or daughter and the care of that newborn child; for the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care, or after surrogacy; and for serious medical conditions.
- Childbirth and recuperation, as well as incapacitation related to the pregnancy before childbirth, generally qualify as serious medical conditions under FMLA.
- Employees can substitute paid leave (their own or donated, if they have exhausted their leave) while under FMLA.
- Employees can use FMLA to bond with a healthy child but can only substitute annual leave for this purpose.

Leave Sharing Programs

- **Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP)**: Donations are made from one federal employee directly to the NIH employee in need. Note that the amount of leave received may not meet the level of need.
- **Leave Bank:** When you become a member of the Leave Bank, it can provide a more reliable source of paid leave donations than VLTP because approved recipients draw from a pooled fund

of annual and restored annual leave up to the Leave Bank's annual cap, and do not need to rely on direct donations from co-workers.

Leave Sharing Guidelines

- Childbirth and recuperation, as well as any incapacitation related to the pregnancy before childbirth, generally qualify as serious medical conditions for leave sharing programs.
- An employee can receive assistance from both leave sharing programs simultaneously.
- It is important to note that in order to receive donated leave from either program, an employee must be projected to go into a non-pay status for at least 24 work hours.
- Neither VLTP nor the Leave Bank can be utilized to bond with a healthy child – this includes after adoption or surrogacy and during foster care.

Advanced Leave

- In appropriate circumstances, a supervisor *may* approve either advanced sick or annual leave upon request by the employee.
- An employee may be advanced up to 240 hours of sick leave depending on the basis for the request and may be advanced no more than the amount of annual leave they would otherwise accrue by the end of the leave year.
- Advanced leave must be repaid, unless the employee dies, retires for disability, or is separated/resigns because of disability.

Benefits Information

To add child to health insurance (opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2809.pdf, form starts on page 16)

If you are already enrolled in a "Self and Family" plan, contact your health plan directly to have your child added to your existing coverage.

To increase your coverage from "Self Only" to "Self Plus One" or from "Self Plus One" to "Self and family" to cover your child, complete the Health Benefits Election Form, SF 2809, and submit it along with a copy of the birth certificate or hospital documentation to the Benefits Office, Building 31, Rm B3C23, **within 60 days** of the birth of your child.

To increase life insurance (opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2817.pdf)

To add/increase family coverage, you must complete a Life Insurance Election Form, SF 2817 and submit it to the Benefits Office, Building 31, Rm B3C23, **within 60 days** of the birth of your child along with a copy of the birth certificate or hospital documentation.

To update beneficiaries

FEGLI (opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2823.pdf)

FERS (opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf3102.pdf)

CSRS (opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2808.pdf)

Unpaid Compensation (opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf1152.pdf)

Leave Resources

NIH Manual Chapter on Family Leave Policies and Programs
(oma1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/person/2300-630-5/)

NIH Leave Sharing Comparison (hr.od.nih.gov/benefits/leave/vlbp/leave.htm)

NIH VLTP Information (hr.nih.gov/benefits/leave/vltp/voluntary-leave-transfer-program-vltp)

NIH Leave Bank Information (hr.od.nih.gov/benefits/leave/vlbp/default.htm)

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Handbook on Leave and Workplace Flexibilities Available for Childbirth, Adoption and Foster Care (opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/handbook-on-leave-and-workplace-flexibilities-for-childbirth-adoption-and-foster-care.pdf)

OPM Fact Sheet on Family and Medical Leave (opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/family-and-medical-leave/)

Complementary Resources

NIH Child and Family Programs
(https://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/childcare/Pages/index.aspx)

The NIH offers a variety of Child Care Programs to support our employees, including on-site daycare facilities, seminars, a parenting listserv, and more.

Work Schedule Flexibilities (hr.nih.gov/working-nih/work-schedules)

Work schedule flexibilities can help leading up to and returning from parental leave.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
(ors.od.nih.gov/sr/dohs/HealthAndWellness/EAP/Pages/index.aspx)

EAP can connect you to other resources you might need.

Find your Contacts

Benefits
AskBenefits@nih.gov
hr.od.nih.gov/benefits/benefitscontacts.htm

Leave Bank
LeaveBank@od.nih.gov
hr.nih.gov/about/hr-contacts

VLTP
hr.nih.gov/about/hr-contacts