

Diocese of Covington

Policies & Procedures Manual

Section: Compliance – Payroll and Personnel

Policy: Family and Medical Leave Policy



Employees of the Diocese of Covington (“Diocese”) may be entitled to a leave of absence under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). This policy provides employees information concerning FMLA entitlements and obligations employees may have during such leaves. If employees have any questions concerning FMLA leave, they should contact the FMLA Coordinator.

I. ELIGIBILITY

FMLA leave is available to “eligible employees.” To be an “eligible employee,” an employee must: (1) have been employed by the Diocese for at least 12 months (which need not be consecutive); (2) have been employed by the Diocese for at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave; and (3) be employed at a worksite where 50 or more employees are located within 75 miles of the worksite.

II. ENTITLEMENTS

The FMLA provides eligible employees with a right to leave, health insurance benefits and, with some limited exceptions, job restoration. The FMLA also entitles employees to certain written notices concerning their potential eligibility for and designation of FMLA leave.

A. Basic FMLA Leave Entitlement:

The FMLA provides eligible employees up to 12 workweeks of unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons during a 12- month period. The 12-month period is determined based on a rolling 12-month period measured backward from the date an employee uses his/her FMLA leave. Leave may be taken for any one, or for a combination, of the following reasons:

- 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 (but not in-law) who has a serious health condition;
- For the employee’s own serious health condition (including any period of incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or childbirth) that makes the employee unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of the employee’s job; and/or
- Because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that an employee’s spouse, son, daughter or parent is a covered impending call or order to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of contingency operation.

A serious health condition is 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.



Qualifying 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.

B. Additional Military Family Leave Entitlement (Injured Service member Leave)

In addition to the basic FMLA leave entitlement discussed above, an eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin of a covered service member is entitled to take up to 26 weeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for the service member with a serious injury or illness. Leave to care for a service member shall only be available during a single 12-month period and, when combined with other FMLA-qualifying leave, may not exceed 26 weeks during the single 12-month period. The single 12-month period begins on the first day an eligible employee takes leave to care for the injured service member.

A “covered service member” means a member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is on the temporary retired list, for a serious injury or illness. A member of the Armed Forces would have a serious injury or illness if he/she has incurred an injury or illness in the line of duty while on active duty in the Armed Forces provided that the injury or illness may render the service member medically unfit to perform duties of the member’s office, grade, rank or rating.

C. Intermittent Leave and Reduced Leave Schedules

FMLA leave usually will be taken for a period of consecutive days, weeks or months. However, employees also are entitled to take FMLA leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary due to a serious health condition of the employee or covered family member or the serious injury or illness of a covered service member.

D. No Work While on Leave

Taking or working at another job while on family/medical leave or any other authorized medical leave of absence is grounds for immediate termination, to the extent permitted by law.

E. Protection of Group Health Insurance Benefits

During FMLA leave, eligible employees are entitled to receive group health plan coverage on the same terms and conditions as if they had continued to work.

F. Restoration of Employment and Benefits

At the end of FMLA leave, subject to some exceptions including situations where job restoration of “key employees” will cause the Diocese substantial and grievous economic injury, employees generally have a right to return to the same or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits and other employment terms. The Diocese will notify employees if they qualify as “key employees,” if it intends to deny reinstatement, and of their rights in such instances. Use of FMLA leave will not result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an eligible employee’s FMLA leave.



G. Notice of Eligibility for, and Designation of, FMLA Leave

Employees requesting FMLA leave are entitled to receive written notice from the Diocese telling them whether they are eligible for FMLA leave and, if not eligible, the reasons why they are not eligible. When eligible for FMLA leave, employees are entitled to receive written notice of: 1) their rights and responsibilities in connection with such leave; 2) the Diocese’s designation of leave as FMLA-qualifying or non-qualifying, and if not FMLA-qualifying, the reasons why; and 3) the amount of leave, if known, that will be counted against the employee’s leave entitlement.

The Diocese may retroactively designate leave as FMLA leave with appropriate written notice to employees provided the Diocese’s failure to designate leave as FMLA-qualifying at an earlier date did not cause harm or injury to the employee. In all cases where leaves qualify for FMLA protection, the Diocese and employee can mutually agree that leave be retroactively designated as FMLA leave.

III. EMPLOYEE FMLA LEAVE OBLIGATIONS

A. Provide Notice of the Need for Leave

Employees who take FMLA leave must timely notify the Diocese of their need for FMLA leave. The following describes the content and timing of such employee notices.

1. Content of Employee Notice

To trigger FMLA leave protections, employees must inform the FMLA Coordinator of the need for FMLA-qualifying leave and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave, if known. Employees may do this by either requesting FMLA leave specifically, or explaining the reasons for leave so as to allow the Diocese to determine that the leave is FMLA-qualifying. For example, employees might explain that:

- a medical condition renders them unable to perform the functions of their job;
- they are pregnant or have been hospitalized overnight;
- they or a covered family member are under the continuing care of a health care provider;
- the leave is due to a qualifying exigency caused by a covered military member being on active duty or called to active duty status; or
- if the leave is for a family member, that the condition renders the family member unable to perform daily activities or that the family member is a covered service member with a serious injury or illness.

Calling in “sick,” without providing the reasons for the needed leave, will not be considered sufficient notice for FMLA leave under this policy. Employees must respond to the Diocese’s questions to determine if absences are potentially FMLA-qualifying.

If employees fail to explain the reasons for FMLA leave, the leave may be denied. When employees seek leave due to FMLA-qualifying reasons for which the Diocese has previously provided FMLA-protected leave, they must specifically reference the qualifying reason for the leave or the need for FMLA leave.



2. Timing of Employee Notice

Employees must provide 30 days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days' notice is not possible, or the approximate timing of the need for leave is not foreseeable, employees must provide the Diocese notice of the need for leave as soon as practicable under the facts and circumstances of the particular case. Employees who fail to give 30 days' notice for foreseeable leave without a reasonable excuse for the delay, or otherwise fail to satisfy FMLA notice obligations, may have FMLA leave delayed or denied.

B. Cooperate in the Scheduling of Planned Medical Treatment (Including Accepting Transfers to Alternative Positions) and Intermittent Leave or Reduced Leave Schedules

When planning medical treatment, employees must consult with the Diocese and make a reasonable effort to schedule treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the Diocese's operations, subject to the approval of an employee's health care provider. Employees must consult with the Diocese prior to the scheduling of treatment to work out a treatment schedule that best suits the needs of both the Diocese and the employees, subject to the approval of an employee's health care provider. If employees providing notice of the need to take FMLA leave on an intermittent basis for planned medical treatment neglect to fulfill this obligation, the Diocese may require employees to attempt to make such arrangements, subject to the approval of the employee's health care provider.

When employees take intermittent or reduced work schedule leave for foreseeable planned medical treatment for the employee or a family member, including during a period of recovery from a serious health condition or to care for a covered service member, the Diocese may temporarily transfer employees, during the period that the intermittent or reduced leave schedules are required, to alternative positions with equivalent pay and benefits for which the employees are qualified and which better accommodate recurring periods of leave.

When employees seek intermittent leave or a reduced leave schedule for reasons unrelated to the planning of medical treatment, upon request, employees must advise the Diocese of the reason why such leave is medically necessary. In such instances, the Diocese and employee shall attempt to work out a leave schedule that meets the employee's needs without unduly disrupting the Diocese's operations, subject to the approval of the employee's health care provider.

C. Submit Medical Certifications Supporting Need for FMLA Leave (Unrelated to Requests for Military Family Leave)

Depending on the nature of FMLA leave sought, employees may be required to submit medical certifications supporting their need for FMLA-qualifying leave. As described below, there generally are three types of FMLA medical certifications: an initial certification, a recertification and a return to work/fitness for duty certification.

It is the employee's responsibility to provide the Diocese with timely, complete and sufficient medical certifications. Whenever the Diocese requests employees to provide FMLA medical



certifications, employees must provide the requested certifications within 15 calendar days after the Diocese's request, unless it is not practicable to do so despite an employee's diligent, good faith efforts. The Diocese shall inform employees if submitted medical certifications are incomplete or insufficient and provide employees at least seven calendar days to cure deficiencies. The Diocese will deny FMLA leave to employees who fail to timely cure deficiencies or otherwise fail to timely submit requested medical certifications.

With the employee's permission, the Diocese (through individuals other than an employee's direct supervisor), may contact the employee's health care provider to authenticate or clarify completed and sufficient medical certifications. If employees choose not to provide the Diocese with authorization allowing it to clarify or authenticate certifications with health care providers, the Diocese may deny FMLA leave if certifications are unclear.

Whenever the Diocese deems it appropriate to do so, it may waive its right to receive timely, complete and/or sufficient FMLA medical certifications.

1. Initial Medical Certifications

Employees requesting leave because of their own, or a covered relation's, serious health condition, or to care for a covered service member, must supply medical certification supporting the need for such leave from their health care provider or, if applicable, the health care provider of their covered family or service member. If employees provide at least 30 days' notice of medical leave, they should submit the medical certification before leave begins. A new initial medical certification will be required on an annual basis for serious medical conditions lasting beyond a single leave year.

If the Diocese has reason to doubt initial medical certifications, it may require employees to obtain a second opinion at the Diocese's expense. If the opinions of the initial and second health care providers differ, the Diocese may, at its expense, require employees to obtain a third, final and binding certification from a health care provider designated or approved jointly by the Diocese and the employee.

2. Medical Recertifications

Depending on the circumstances and duration of FMLA leave, the Diocese may require employees to provide recertification of medical conditions giving rise to the need for leave. The Diocese will notify employees if recertification is required and will give employees at least 15 calendar days to provide medical recertification.

3. Return to Work/Fitness for Duty Medical Certifications

Unless notified that providing such certifications is not necessary, employees returning to work from FMLA leaves that were taken because of their own serious health conditions that made them unable to perform their jobs must provide the Diocese medical certification confirming they are able to return to work and the employees' ability to perform the essential functions of the employees' position, with or without



reasonable accommodation. The Diocese may delay and/or deny job restoration until employees provide return to work/fitness for duty certifications.

D. Submit Certifications Supporting Need for Military Family Leave

Upon request, the first time employees seek leave due to qualifying exigencies arising out of the active duty or call to active duty status of a covered military member, the Diocese may require employees to provide: 1) a copy of the covered military member's active duty orders or other documentation issued by the military indicating the covered military member is on active duty or call to active duty status and the dates of the covered military member's active duty service; and 2) a certification from the employee setting forth information concerning the nature of the qualifying exigency for which leave is requested. Employees shall provide a copy of new active duty orders or other documentation issued by the military for leaves arising out of qualifying exigencies arising out of a different active duty or call to active duty status of the same or a different covered military member.

When leave is taken to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness, the Diocese may require employees to obtain certifications completed by an authorized health care provider of the covered service member. In addition, and in accordance with the FMLA regulations, the Diocese may request that the certification submitted by employees set forth additional information provided by the employee and/or the covered service member confirming entitlement to such leave.

E. Substitute Paid Leave for Unpaid FMLA Leave

Employees may elect to use any accrued paid time while taking unpaid FMLA leave. The substitution of paid time for unpaid FMLA leave time does not extend the length of FMLA leave and the paid time will run concurrently with an employee's FMLA entitlement. Leaves of absence taken in connection with a disability leave plan or workers' compensation injury/illness shall run concurrently with any FMLA leave entitlement. Upon written request, the Diocese will allow employees to use accrued paid time to supplement any paid disability benefits.

F. Pay Employee's Share of Health Insurance Premiums

During FMLA leave, employees are entitled to continued group health plan coverage under the same conditions as if they had continued to work. Unless the Diocese notifies employees of other arrangements, whenever employees are receiving pay from the Diocese during FMLA leave, the Diocese will deduct the employee portion of the group health plan premium from the employee's paycheck in the same manner as if the employee was actively working.

If FMLA leave is unpaid, employees must pay their portion of the group health premium through a method determined by the Diocese upon leave.

The Diocese's obligation to maintain health care coverage ceases if an employee's premium payment is more than 30 days late. If an employee's payment is more than 15 days late, the Diocese will send a letter notifying the employee that coverage will be dropped on a specified date unless the co-payment is received before that date. If employees do not return to work

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within 30 calendar days at the end of the leave period (unless employees cannot return to work because of a serious health condition or other circumstances beyond their control), they will be required to reimburse the Diocese for the cost of the premiums the Diocese paid for maintaining coverage during their unpaid FMLA leave.

IV. COORDINATION OF FMLA LEAVE WITH OTHER LEAVE POLICIES

The FMLA does not affect any federal, state or local law prohibiting discrimination, or supersede any state or local law [or collective bargaining agreement], which provides greater family or medical leave rights. For additional information concerning leave entitlements and obligations that might arise when FMLA leave is either not available or exhausted, please consult the Diocese's other leave policies in this Handbook or contact Human Resources.

V. QUESTIONS AND/OR COMPLAINTS ABOUT FMLA LEAVE

If you have questions regarding this FMLA policy, please contact the FMLA Coordinator. The Diocese is committed to complying with the FMLA and, whenever necessary, shall interpret and apply this policy in a manner consistent with the FMLA.

The FMLA makes it unlawful for employers to: 1) interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under FMLA; or 2) discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by FMLA or involvement in any proceeding under or relating to FMLA. If employees believe their FMLA rights have been violated, they should contact the Human Resources Department immediately. The Diocese will investigate any FMLA complaints and take prompt and appropriate remedial action to address and/or remedy any FMLA violation. Employees also may file FMLA complaints with the United States Department of Labor or may bring private lawsuits alleging FMLA violations.

VI. EXEMPTION FOR HIGHLY COMPENSATED EMPLOYEES

The Diocese may choose not to return highly compensated employees (highest paid 10% of employees at a worksite or within 75 miles of that worksite) to their former or equivalent positions following a leave if restoration of employment will cause substantial economic injury to the Diocese. (This fact-specific determination will be made by the Diocese on a case-by-case basis.) The Diocese will notify you if you qualify as a "highly compensated" employee, if the Diocese intends to deny reinstatement, and of your rights in such instances.