

Going on Medical Leave Because of a Serious Health Condition

What classified staff need to know about their medical leave with the University of Pittsburgh

You may be eligible for two types of medical leaves for a serious health condition: Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and short-term disability (STD).

FMLA is a federal law that provides up to 12 weeks (60 working days) of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible staff members. In order to qualify, you must have been employed by the University of Pittsburgh for at least 12 months, and you must have worked at least 1,250 hours for the University of Pittsburgh in the past 12 months.

STD is a University paid benefit that provides an income replacement of 60 percent of your weekly salary for your own medical condition for up to 26 weeks. To qualify, you must be at least 50 percent effort, and you must have been employed by the University of Pittsburgh for at least six months.

Why should I apply for FMLA/STD?

FMLA leave is meant to protect you and your job. Even if you have paid time off to cover your entire leave, you are still required to file a claim. University policy requires that you file an FMLA claim if you have missed more than three consecutive work days. If you are normally off on a weekend and you are off work Thursday, Friday, and Monday, you must file an FMLA claim on Tuesday if you are still off from work.

What is short-term disability (STD)?

STD provides income replacement for an absence caused by your own medical condition. You may be eligible for up to 26 weeks of STD leave. The length of time you will be approved for depends on your condition. MetLife and your attending physician will work together to determine the dates in which your leave will be approved.

- You must complete a 30 calendar day waiting period before becoming eligible for STD payments.
- You must exhaust your sick time before becoming eligible for STD payments.
- You may use your vacation and personal time to cover part of the leave after you have exhausted your sick time.

This means that if you have fewer than 23 paid days to use (sick, vacation, and/or personal days), a portion of your waiting period may be unpaid. Then, once you have completed the waiting period, you will receive 60 percent of your pay through your approved claim dates.

How do I apply for FMLA/STD?

- Contact your supervisor or department administrator to inform them of your intent to take a medical leave.
- Contact MetLife at 1-888-777-7418 to file your FMLA and STD claims approximately 30 days prior to the start

of the medical leave or as soon as you know of your need for leave. MetLife will send you a packet of information and forms that you must review. You and your attending physician must complete the forms, which must be returned directly to MetLife.

Do I have to complete my Pitt Worx time card while I am on FMLA/STD?

Yes, while you are on a paid leave you will be required to document the sick, vacation, and/or personal time that you use to cover your leave. You will not be required to submit a time card while you are on an unpaid leave. Please work with your supervisor prior to your leave to determine if you are required to submit your own time cards or if your supervisor will submit them on your behalf while you are on an approved medical leave. If you are on an unpaid leave, you will not have access to your Pitt Worx time card until your department submits paperwork to document your return to work.

Do I have to use paid time off when I am on medical leave?

You are required to exhaust your sick time while on medical leave.

- If you have enough sick time to cover all of your 30-calendar day waiting period and some of your approved STD portion, you will be required to use your sick time.
- You may qualify to receive donated time from the University's Voluntary Sick Time Donation Bank (VSTDB) if you have less than 10 days of sick time at the start of your medical leave. Eligible employees will automatically have VSTDB time added towards their leave. The sick time added will get the employee to a total of 10 sick days to be utilized during their leave. Part-time employees will have their VSTDB time prorated by their percent of effort. Additional information about this benefit can be found in our [online Staff Handbook](#).
- If you do not qualify for the VSTDB and still do not have enough sick time to cover your 30-calendar day waiting period, you can either use vacation or personal time to be paid for that time, or a portion of your leave period will be unpaid.

Do I accrue vacation and sick time during a leave?

No, you do not accrue sick or vacation time, regardless of whether your time off is paid or unpaid. If your leave begins or ends on any day other than the first of the month, Pitt Worx will calculate a partial accrual for those months, based on the exact number of days you are working.

What should I do if I do not meet the eligibility criteria for FMLA/STD?

You may request a personal leave through your department. If approved, a leave of absence agreement outlining the details of the leave must be reviewed by the Office of Human Resources' Employee & Labor Relations department.

Do I receive payment for University holidays and recess days during my leave?

A University holiday/recess day does not extend either a paid or unpaid leave. However, if you have sick or vacation days that you are applying toward the leave and these days fall before and after a University holiday/recess day, then you will receive pay for the holiday. You will not be paid for holidays/ recess that fall during the unpaid portion of your leave.

What if I'm part of a collective bargaining unit?

Reference your collective bargaining agreement for your union's specific leave requirements and process.

I was a temporary employee prior to being hired as a staff employee. Does my time at a temporary status count towards FMLA eligibility?

Yes. Time as a University employee, including time worked as a temporary employee, counts toward FMLA eligibility.

What happens to my benefits and other deductions while I am on FMLA/STD?

If you use your paid time off to cover the leave, or if you are receiving STD payments, your earnings will be calculated and deductions will be taken in the following order: pretax deductions, taxes, involuntary deductions, then voluntary deductions.

If your paycheck is not enough to cover your deductions, you will be responsible for outstanding obligations. Depending on the length of time you will be on an unpaid status, you will either be directly billed for the cost of your health and welfare benefits by the Payroll Department, or the cost of the insurance will be deducted from your paycheck upon your return to work. It is your responsibility to ensure your premiums are paid.

Please contact the Benefits Department if you are currently using or planning to use educational benefits while on FMLA to ensure proper application of the benefit.

What is required when I return to work?

Employees should provide their Return-to-Work approval date to both MetLife and their department, promptly notify their department of any changes to the return date, and, if a workplace accommodation is needed upon their return, contact Disability Resources and Services by submitting a request through through the [DRS request form](#) or by calling (412) 648-7890.

If you do not return to the University at the end of an approved leave and work for at least 30 calendar days, you may be required to repay to the University premiums that were paid on your behalf as a staff member. Recovery of premiums will be made consistent with FMLA.

Who do I call if I have questions?

MetLife	888-777-7418
Benefits Department.....	833-852-2210
Parking.....	412-624-4034
Payroll Department.....	412-624-8070
Life Solutions.....	866-647-3432

The information presented in this brochure is intended to provide a general overview of the disability plans. Plan documents and additional details may also be found at hr.pitt.edu/benefits. If there is a conflict between the brochure and the plan/contracts, then the plan and contracts will control. Benefits may be modified from time to time as required by applicable laws, and benefits may be modified or terminated as deemed necessary or appropriate by the University. Any such modifications or terminations will be communicated in writing as appropriate. Staff covered under collective bargaining agreements are governed by the terms of those agreements. No one speaking on behalf of the plans or purporting to speak on behalf of the plans can modify the terms of the plans in any way. The terms of the plans control in all instances.