



Sick Leave and Personal Leave Reminders for 2023-24



As we approach the 2023-24 school year, HEA and HPS want to remind you of some of the changes to Sick Leave and Personal Leave that were negotiated in the last contract cycle, since some of these changes may impact how you use Personal Leave, especially, next school year.

The current structure (CBA Sections 14.2 & 14.8) is as follows.

- **Allocation:** Each certificated staff member (1.0 FTE) annually receives:
 - 10 Sick Leave days per year
 - 2 Personal Leave days per year*
 - *An employee who accesses five or fewer days per year of sick and personal leave combined will receive a 3rd personal leave day the following year.
 - As a result of this, beginning in 2023-24, eligible employees will receive a 3rd personal leave day.

- **Accrual and cash-out:** Sick Leave and Personal Leave now accrue separately and have different cash-out rules.
 - Sick leave carries over from year to year and is subject to all state laws regarding accumulation (up to 180 days) and cash-out (using the 4:1 ratio).
 - Parameters regarding Personal Leave accumulation and cash-out are locally negotiated. Current CBA language provides:
 - Unused Personal Leave accumulates from year to year up; and up to five (5) days may be carried over into the following year;
 - Any Personal Leave days above 5 at the end of a school year will be automatically cashed out in August on a 1:1 basis at the extra service rate;
 - Any unused Personal Leave days remaining upon an employee's separation from employment are automatically cashed out (1:1) at the extra service rate.

- **Sick Leave Access & Use:** Sick Leave may be accessed for appropriate use* according to state rules at any time, though HPS may ask for medical certification or the reason for absence in certain circumstances (typically for leaves five days or longer, or when there is a pattern of absences on the part of an individual and/or group of employees). **More about appropriate use on the next page.*

- **Personal Leave Access & Use:** Personal Leave may be accessed for any reason as outlined below; employees do not need to disclose the reason for accessing personal leave.

An employee may access up to five (5) Personal Leave Days in a given school year under the following guidelines.

- Up to two (2) days of Personal Leave may be used at any time, even connected to a holiday or break.
- 3-5 days of Personal Leave may be used in a row with advance notice, and adjacent to breaks, by a limited number of staff. Any use of three (3) or more consecutive days of personal leave:
 - must be entered into the District’s absence reporting system at least 28 calendar days (4 weeks) in advance;
 - requires written or email notice to the employee’s administrative supervisor and Human Resources (human.resources@highlineschools.org) at least 28 calendar days (4 weeks) in advance;
 - cannot be taken during the first and last 10 student days of the school year; and
 - is limited on the school days immediately before and after a holiday or school break for employees who require a substitute to the first 2% of the District’s total nonsupervisory certificated staff who request it.
 - may be requested up to one year in advance.
- The District will create an online calendar to assist with scheduling Personal Leave before and after a holiday or school break. In the meantime, this information may be accessed by contacting HR (human.resources@highlineschools.org).

***What is “appropriate use” for Sick Leave, as opposed to Personal Leave?**

Sick leave actually has many allowable uses, and because it carries over up to 180 days, and days over 180 may be cashed out or rolled into a VEBA account, we want to highlight both the short-term and long-term uses of sick leave. (Keep in mind that some of these uses require an HR approval process based on documentation from a healthcare provider or other relevant source.)

➤ **Examples of appropriate “short-term” uses of sick leave include situations such as:**

- personal illness or injury, including issues of both physical and mental health;
- appointments with a health care professional for yourself or your dependent child;
- emergencies (see CBA Section 14.7, but this includes such situations as unpredicted daycare closures, property damage needing immediate attention due to storms or flooding etc., religious leave, and extensions of bereavement leave);
- pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, childbirth and recovery, and parental bonding;
- care of a child of the employee under the age of eighteen (18) with a health condition (illness, injury, etc.) that requires treatment or supervision;
- care for a spouse, domestic partner or parent, parent-in-law, or grandparent with a serious or emergency health condition;
- care for an adult child incapable of self-care due to a disability (temporary or permanent).

- **Examples of appropriate “long-term” uses of sick leave include such situations as:**
 - pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, childbirth and recovery, and parental bonding;
 - care of a child or immediate family member (as listed above) of the employee who is ill and/or temporarily or permanently disabled and unable to care for themselves for an extended period of time;
 - to continue pay while out on qualifying FMLA unpaid leave, which may include items listed above and/or recovery from surgery or a long-term/serious illness;
 - to supplement income while on L&I leave or PFML, both of which only provide partial wage replacement;
 - to cash-out or roll into VEBA once sick leave accrues beyond 180 days or at retirement; VEBA funds can be used tax free to pay for medical expenses, including medical premiums, prior to and during retirement.

Wondering which type of leave to use for wellness?

When thinking about physical and mental health wellness, both your personal leave AND sick leave are important to ensuring you are taking care of yourself and your family – in addition to setting clear work/personal boundaries around your work-week, weekends, and breaks. Here are some examples:

- **I should access Sick Leave for physical and mental health wellness if:**
 - I (or a family member who requires my care) am experiencing physical symptoms of illness or injury (e.g. congestion, fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, pain, coughing, etc.) and need to stay home to rest and/or seek treatment and/or take a COVID test, etc. – AND -- in order to not potentially spread my illness to others.
 - I am on an approved FMLA, PFML, or parental leave, etc. and want to continue to be paid.
 - I (or a family member who requires my care) am experiencing mental health symptoms (e.g. panic attacks, anxiety, emotional dysregulation) that would interfere with my ability to perform my job effectively and need to stay home to rest or seek treatment.
 - I (or a family member who requires my care) have a diagnosed illness or injury that requires me to miss work on a short or long-term basis.
 - I (or a family member who requires my care) have an appointment with a health care provider (mental or physical health) that can't be scheduled outside the workday, or a surgery that will interfere with work.

- **I should access Personal Leave or use weekends/evenings/breaks for wellness if:**
 - I want to do something like....run a marathon, go on a hike, go skiing, take a cooking/nutrition class...because being physically active and eating well improves my overall physical health and sense of well-being.
 - I want to... attend a family reunion or graduation, take or extend a vacation, go snowboarding, go boating, see a movie, hang out with friends, chaperone my child's field trip...because doing fun things improves my overall mental health and sense of well-being.

- **Note: Emergency Leave (including Religious Leave) is deducted from Sick Leave.**
 - Options for Emergency Leave and Religious Leave are available in Frontline, but require approval from HR. Please see CBA Section 14.7 for examples of appropriate use of Emergency Leave.
 - When accessing these options in Frontline, please also contact HR (human.resources@highlineschools.org) and explain the reason for the absence. In some cases, documentation may be requested.

For all other types of leaves outlined in the CBA, please contact HR (human.resources@highlineschools.org) directly.

Questions? Do you have questions or want to talk through a specific scenario involving potential use of Sick Leave and/or Personal Leave? Contact one or more of the individuals below:

- Laura Castaneda, Leaves and Guest Employee Services Lead, Human Resources
 - laura.castaneda@highlineschools.org or (206) 631-3125
- Chris Larsen, Executive Director of Human Resources
 - christina.larsen@highlineschools.org or (206) 631-3122
- Sandy Hunt, HEA President
 - sandy.hunt@washingtonea.org or (206) 246-4340
- Elizabeth Beck, WEA UniServ Director
 - ebeck@washingtonea.org or (206) 246-9312