

Board Policy – Family Care and Leave Policy
Board Policy 4161.8

BRIDGES School Board believes that we will provide a quality work environment for all employees.

The school shall not interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right for family care and medical leave provided to an eligible employee, as defined below, under the law. In addition, the school shall not discharge or discriminate against any employee for opposing any practice made unlawful by, or because of, his/her involvement in any inquiry or proceeding related to the family care and medical leave. (Government Code 12945.2)

Definitions

Any word or phrase defined below shall have the same meaning throughout this administrative regulation except where otherwise specifically defined.

Child means a biological, adopted, or foster child; a stepchild; a legal ward; or a child of a person standing in loco parentis as long as the child is under 18 years of age or an adult dependent child. (Government Code 12945.2)

Eligible employee means an employee who has been employed with the school for at least 12 months and who has at least 1,250 hours of service with the school during the previous 12-month period. (Government Code 12945.2)

Parent means a biological, foster, or adoptive parent; a stepparent; a legal guardian; or another person who stood in loco parentis to the employee when the employee was a child. Parent does not include a spouse's parents. (Government Code 12945.2)

Serious health condition means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either of the following: (Government Code 12945.2)

1. Inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential health care facility
2. Continuing treatment or continuing supervision by a health care provider, including one or more of the following:
 - a. A period of incapacity of more than three consecutive full days
 - b. Any period of incapacity or treatment for such incapacity due to a chronic serious health condition
 - c. For purposes of leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), any period of incapacity due to pregnancy or for prenatal care

d. Any period of incapacity which is permanent or long term due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective

e. Any period of absence to receive multiple treatments, including recovery, by a health care provider

Spouse means a partner in marriage as defined in Family Code 300 or 1 USC 7. In addition, for purposes of rights under the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), a registered domestic partner shall have the same rights, protections, and benefits as a spouse and protections provided to a spouse's child shall also apply to a child of a registered domestic partner.

Eligibility

The school shall grant family care and medical leave to eligible employees for the following reasons: (Government Code 12945.2)

1. Because of the birth of a child of the employee or placement of a child with the employee in connection with the employee's adoption or foster care of the child
2. To care for the employee's child, parent, or spouse with a serious health condition
3. Because of the employee's own serious health condition that makes him/her unable to perform one or more essential functions of his/her position, except that CFRA leave shall not cover an employee's disability on account of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions
4. Because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, child, or parent is a covered military member on covered active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty)
5. To care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, child, parent, or next of kin, as defined, of the servicemember

In addition to FMLA leave for disability on account of a pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions pursuant to item #3 above, a female employee disabled by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions may be entitled to take leave for a reasonable period of time, not to exceed four months. (Government Code 12945)

Terms of Leave

An eligible employee shall be entitled to a total of 12 work weeks of family care and medical leave during any 12-month period, except in the case of leave to care for a covered servicemember as provided under "Military Caregiver Leave" below. (Government Code 12945.2)

This 12-month period shall coincide with the fiscal year.

Leave taken pursuant to the CFRA shall run concurrently with leave taken pursuant to the FMLA, except in the following circumstances:

1. Leave taken to care for a registered domestic partner or a child of a domestic partner. Such leave shall count as leave under the CFRA only.
2. Leave taken for disability on account of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. FMLA leave taken for these purposes shall run concurrently with the California pregnancy disability leave granted pursuant to Government Code 12945. CFRA leave related to the birth of a child shall not commence until the expiration of the pregnancy disability leave. (Government Code 12945, 12945.2)

Leave taken for the birth or placement of a child must be concluded within the 12-month period beginning on the date of the birth or placement of the child. Such leave does not need to be taken in one continuous period of time. The basic minimum duration of the leave for birth or placement of a child shall be two weeks. However, the school shall grant a request for leave of less than two weeks' duration on any two occasions.

If both parents of a child work for the school, their family care and medical leave related to the birth or placement of the child shall be limited to a combined total of 12 weeks. This restriction shall apply whether or not the parents are married, not married, or registered domestic partners. (Government Code 12945.2)

Use/Substitution of Paid Leave

During the period of family care and medical leave or pregnancy disability leave, the employee may elect to use his/her accrued vacation leave, other accrued time off, or any other paid or unpaid time off negotiated with the school. If the leave is because of the employee's own serious health condition, the employee may use accrued sick leave pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement and/or Board policy. (Government Code 12945.2)

Intermittent Leave/Reduced Leave Schedule

Leave related to the serious health condition of the employee or his/her child, parent, or spouse may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary, as determined by the health care provider of the person with the serious health condition. However, the school may limit leave increments to the shortest period of time that the school's payroll system uses to account for absences or use of leave.

If an employee needs intermittent leave or leave on a reduced work schedule that is foreseeable based on planned medical treatment for the employee or a family member, the school may require the employee to transfer temporarily to an available alternative position. This alternative position must have equivalent pay and benefits, the employee must be qualified for the position, and the position must better accommodate recurring periods of leave than the employee's regular job. Transfer to an alternative position may include altering an existing job to better accommodate the employee's need for intermittent leave or a reduced leave schedule.

Request for Leave

An employee shall provide at least verbal notice sufficient to make the school aware that he/she needs family care and medical leave and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. The employee need not expressly assert or mention FMLA/CFRA to satisfy this requirement; however, he/she must state the reason the leave is needed (e.g., birth of child, medical treatment). If more information is necessary to determine whether the employee is eligible for family care and medical leave, the Director shall inquire further and obtain the necessary details of the leave to be taken.

Based on the information provided by the employee, the Director shall designate the leave, paid or unpaid, as FMLA/CFRA qualifying leave and shall give notice of such designation to the employee.

When the need for the leave is foreseeable based on an expected birth, placement for adoption or foster care, or planned medical treatment for a serious health condition of the employee or a family member, the employee shall provide the school with at least 30 days advance notice before the leave. The employee shall consult with the school and make a reasonable effort to schedule, subject to the health care provider's approval, any planned medical treatment or supervision so as to minimize disruption to school operations. (Government Code 12945.2)

When the 30 days notice is not practicable because of a lack of knowledge of approximately when leave will be required to begin, a change in circumstances, or a medical emergency, the employee shall provide the school with notice as soon as practicable.

Certification of Health Condition

At the time of the employee's request for leave for his/her own or his/her child's, parent's, or spouse's serious health condition, or within five business days of the request, the Director shall request that the employee provide certification by a health care provider of the need for leave. Upon receiving the school's request, the employee shall provide the certification within 15 days, unless either the Director provides additional time or it is not practicable under the particular circumstances, despite the employee's diligent, good faith efforts.

The certification shall include the following:

1. The date on which the serious health condition began
2. The probable duration of the condition
3. If the employee is requesting leave to care for a child, parent, or spouse with a serious health condition, both of the following:
 - a. Statement that the serious health condition warrants the participation of a family member to provide care during a period of the treatment or supervision of the child, parent, or spouse

b. Estimated amount of time the health care provider believes the employee needs to care for the child, parent, or spouse

4. If the employee is requesting leave because of his/her own serious health condition, a statement that due to the serious health condition, he/she is unable to work at all or is unable to perform one or more essential functions of his/her job

5. If the employee is requesting leave for intermittent treatment or is requesting leave on a reduced leave schedule for planned medical treatment, a statement of the medical necessity for the leave, the dates on which treatment is expected to be given, the duration of such treatment, and the expected duration of the leave

The Director shall not request any genetic information, as defined in 42 USC 2000ff, from any employee or his/her family member except as necessary to comply with a certification requirement for FMLA/CFRA leave purposes or with the prior written authorization of the employee. Any such genetic information received by the school shall be kept confidential in accordance with law.

When an employee has provided sufficient medical certification to enable the school to determine whether the employee's leave request is FMLA-eligible, the Director shall notify the employee within five business days whether the leave is FMLA-eligible. The Director may also retroactively designate leave as FMLA/CFRA as long as there is no individualized harm to the employee.

If the Director doubts the validity of a certification that accompanies a request for leave for the employee's own serious health condition, he/she may require the employee to obtain a second opinion from a school-approved health care provider, at school expense. If the second opinion is contrary to the first, the Director may require the employee to obtain a third medical opinion from a third health care provider approved by both the employee and the school, again at school expense. The opinion of the third health care provider shall be final and binding. (Government Code 12945.2)

If additional leave is needed when the time estimated by the health care provider expires, the school may require the employee to provide recertification in the manner specified in items #1-5 above. (Government Code 12945.2)

Fitness for Duty Upon Return to Work

Upon expiration of leave taken for his/her own serious health condition, an employee shall present certification from his/her health care provider that he/she is able to resume work.

The certification from the employee's health care provider shall address the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of his/her job.

Rights to Reinstatement and Maintenance of Benefits

Upon granting an employee's request for family care and medical leave, the Director shall guarantee to reinstate the employee in the same or a comparable position when the leave ends. (Government Code 12945.2)

However, the school may refuse to reinstate an employee returning from leave to the same or a comparable position if all of the following apply: (Government Code 12945.2)

1. The employee is a salaried "key employee" who is among the highest paid 10 percent of those employees who are employed within 75 miles of the employee's worksite.
2. The refusal is necessary to prevent substantial and grievous economic injury to the school's operations.
3. The school informs the employee of its intent to refuse reinstatement at the time it determines that the refusal is necessary, and the employee fails to immediately return to service.

During the period when an employee is on family care and medical leave, he/she shall maintain his/her status with the school and the leave shall not constitute a break in service for purposes of longevity, seniority under any collective bargaining agreement, or any employee benefit plan. (Government Code 12945.2)

For a period of 12 work weeks, the school shall continue to provide an eligible employee on family care and medical leave the group health plan coverage that was in place before he/she took the leave. The employee shall reimburse the school for premiums paid during the family care and medical leave if he/she fails to return to school employment after the expiration of the leave and the failure is for any reason other than the continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition or other circumstances beyond his/her control. (Government Code 12945.2)

In addition, during the period when an employee is on family care and medical leave, he/she shall be entitled to continue to participate in other employee benefit plans including life insurance, short-term or long-term disability insurance, accident insurance, pension and retirement plans, and supplemental unemployment benefit plans to the same extent and under the same conditions as apply to an unpaid leave taken for any other purpose. However, for purposes of pension and retirement plans, the school shall not be required to make plan payments for an employee during the leave period and the leave period shall not be counted for purposes of time accrued under the plan. (Government Code 12945.2)

Notifications

The Director shall provide the following notifications about state and federal law related to FMLA/CFRA:

1. General Notice: Information explaining the provisions of the FMLA/CFRA and employee rights and obligations shall be posted in a conspicuous place on school premises, or electronically, and shall be included in employee handbooks.

The general notice shall also explain an employee's obligation to provide the Director with at least 30 days notice of the need for the leave, when the need for the leave is reasonably foreseeable.

2. Eligibility Notice: When an employee requests leave or when the Director acquires knowledge that an employee's leave may be for an FMLA/CFRA qualifying reason, the Director shall, within five business days, provide notification to the employee of his/her eligibility to take such leave.

3. Rights and Responsibilities Notice: Each time the eligibility notice is provided to an employee, the Director shall provide written notification explaining the specific expectations and obligations of the employee, including any consequences for a failure to meet those obligations. Such notice shall include, as appropriate:

a. A statement that the leave may be designated and counted against the employee's annual FMLA/CFRA leave entitlement and the appropriate 12-month entitlement period, if qualifying

b. Any requirements for the employee to furnish medical certification of a serious health condition, serious injury or illness, or qualifying exigency arising out of active duty or call to active duty status and the consequences of failing to provide the certification

c. The employee's right to substitute paid leave, whether the school will require substitution of paid leave, conditions related to any substitution, and the employee's entitlement to take unpaid leave if the employee does not meet the conditions for paid leave

d. Any requirements for the employee to make any premium payments to maintain health benefits, the arrangement for making such payments, and the possible consequences of failure to make payments on a timely basis

e. If applicable, the employee's status as a "key employee," potential consequence that restoration may be denied following the FMLA leave, and explanation of the conditions required for such denial

f. The employee's right to maintenance of benefits during the leave and restoration to the same or an equivalent job upon return from leave

g. The employee's potential liability for health insurance premiums paid by the school during the employee's unpaid FMLA leave should the employee not return to service after the leave

Any time the information provided in the above notice changes, the Director shall, within five business days of his/her receipt of an employee's first notice of need for leave, provide the employee with a written notice referencing the prior notice and describing any changes to the notice.

4. Designation Notice: When the Director has information (e.g., sufficient medical certification) to determine whether the leave qualifies as FMLA/CFRA leave, he/she shall, within five

business days, provide written notification designating the leave as FMLA/CFRA qualifying or, if the leave will not be so designated, the reason for that determination.

If the amount of leave needed is known, the notice shall include the number of hours, days, or weeks that will be counted against the employee's FMLA/CFRA entitlement. If it is not possible to provide that number at the time of the designation notice, notification shall be provided of the amount of leave counted against the employee's entitlement upon request by the employee and at least once in every 30-day period if leave was taken in that period.

If the school requires paid leave to be substituted for unpaid family care and medical leave, the notice shall so specify. If the school requires an employee to present a fitness-for-duty certification that addresses the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job, the notice shall also specify that requirement.

Any time the information provided in the designation notice changes, the Director shall, within five business days, provide the employee with written notice referencing the prior notice and describing any changes to the notice.

The Director shall maintain records pertaining to an individual employee's use of family care and medical leave in accordance with law. (Government Code 12946)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

44965 Granting of leaves of absence for pregnancy and childbirth

FAMILY CODE

297-297.5 Rights, protections and benefits under law; registered domestic partners

300 Validity of marriage

GOVERNMENT CODE

12940 Unlawful employment practices

12945 Pregnancy; childbirth or related medical condition; unlawful practice

12945.1-12945.2 California Family Rights Act