

## City of Cambridge Parental Leave Policy

(Effective November 1, 2015)

The City of Cambridge recognizes the vital importance of having time off to recover from childbirth and to care for, nurture and bond with a new child. Therefore, in order to assist families in these efforts and support employees as they balance work and family life, the City has established the following policy for non-union employees. This policy will apply to union employees only if specifically provided for in collective bargaining agreements.

Non-union employees in regular, benefitted positions may take up to a 24-week leave of absence for the purpose of recovering from pregnancy/childbirth and caring for his or her newborn or newly adopted/placed child or children. This leave of absence shall apply equally to parents regardless of gender, upon the occurrence of any of the following qualifying events: a natural birth by any method, adoption or foster placement of a child under the age of 18 (or under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled), surrogacy, or stillbirth.

A portion of this 24-week period may be paid using the following forms of benefit time:

- All new parents, provided they meet the threshold eligibility requirements described below, will be entitled to eight (8) weeks of paid parental leave to be used within the first year of the qualifying event.
- In addition, women who have given birth may use up to eight (8) weeks of their accumulated sick time immediately following the birth, i.e., during the disability portion of their leave.
- All new parents will also be allowed to use up to four (4) weeks of their accumulated sick time per calendar year to care for and bond with their new child or children, in accordance with the City's Sick Leave Policy.
- Employees may also use their accrued vacation, personal, compensatory and/or administrative time.

Paid parental leave must be used within 12 calendar months following the qualifying event. Birth mothers will typically choose to use paid parental leave after using sick time for the disability portion of their leave. Parental leave may be used on an intermittent basis, in increments of one work day.

No more than eight (8) weeks of paid parental leave will be granted in any twelve (12) month period, regardless of the number of children born, placed or adopted. However, employees who give birth to, adopt or foster more than three children per year may be entitled to an extended unpaid leave of absence, pursuant to Massachusetts state law.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent a birth mother from using additional accrued sick time, either before the birth or after the initial eight (8) week period following the birth, provided that she submits appropriate medical documentation.

Before taking any unpaid leave, employees are encouraged to use the maximum amount of sick leave allowable under this policy and to exhaust all other forms of available paid leave.

All paid parental leave and any other paid benefit time taken under this policy will run concurrently with any and all available leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") and the Massachusetts Parental Leave Act ("MPLA"), to the extent permitted by law.

#### Eligibility for Paid Parental Leave

With the implementation of this policy, paid parental leave will be available to all new parents, regardless of gender, upon the occurrence of one of the following qualifying events: a natural birth by any method, adoption or foster placement of a child under the age of 18 (or under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled), surrogacy, or stillbirth. In order to be eligible for paid parental leave, an employee must have worked for the City for at least 3 continuous months prior to the qualifying event in a regular, non-union position budgeted to work at least 20 hours per week.

#### Notice Requirements

Employees who wish to take paid parental leave must complete the attached Parental Leave Request Form and submit it to their Department Head or his/her designee. This form may be submitted as soon as the employee knows the approximate date his/her leave will commence. If possible, employees are asked to provide at least 30 days advance notice so that they have an opportunity to discuss their anticipated leave with their supervisor, Department Head or designee, and/or the Personnel Department. Such discussions may cover issues such as anticipated length of leave, benefit time balances, required documentation, and status of work projects. This will help to ensure the needs of both the employee and the Department are met.

If 30 days advance notice is not possible, then notice must be provided as soon as is practicable. Prior to using paid parental leave in smaller increments after any initial period of absence, employees are required to provide at least 48 hours' notice if possible.

#### Employee Benefits During Leave

Employees will continue to accrue service credit, sick leave, vacation leave and personal time during any paid portion of the leave. For any unpaid portion of the leave, accumulated benefits will be preserved at the level earned as of the commencement of the leave, but will not accrue further while the employee is not being paid.

Employees will be responsible for the regular employee share of any health and life insurance premiums during any paid portion of the leave. For the first twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave, employees will continue to be responsible for the regular employee share only, as the City will maintain its share of the premium contributions. Beginning with the thirteenth (13th) week of unpaid leave, employees will be responsible for 100% of the cost of any health and life insurance plans.

An employee's use of paid parental leave will not affect his/her eligibility for administrative days or sick leave incentive payments. Any use of sick leave will continue to impact eligibility for those programs.

### Return to Work

The City expects that department managers and supervisors will recognize the challenges associated with becoming a new parent and will support returning employees. Supervisors and returning employees are encouraged to have ongoing discussions, as necessary, regarding an employee's transition back to work.

Employees wishing to temporarily work part-time or on a flexible schedule upon their return are urged to let their supervisors know of their request with as much advance notice as possible. Employees should also consult the City's Flex Time Policy to become familiar with its guidelines. Requests for flexible or reduced work schedules within the first six months of an employee's return should therefore be given serious consideration, and should generally be approved unless the operational or business needs of the department cannot be met.

Employees taking time off from work in accordance with this policy will be reinstated to their former position or, in rare cases, to a similar position. While changes in particular work assignments may be necessary, employees' preferences will be taken into account.

Employees are responsible for keeping their supervisors informed about any changes to their anticipated return to work date. Similar to other leaves, failure to return to work on the designated date of return will be considered a voluntary termination of employment.

### Managers' Role

It is vitally important that Department heads, managers and supervisors support employees who are eligible for leave under this policy. The first step in being able to provide that support is to become familiar with this policy and other City policies that may be helpful to employees trying to balance work and family needs, such as the Policy on Break Time for Nursing Mothers and the Flex Time Policy. Managers should be prepared to help employees understand the benefits that are available to them and should provide employees with assistance in navigating any procedural requirements or expectations. In order to facilitate smooth transitional periods on both ends of the leave, managers and employees should work together to discuss the anticipated length of the leave, identify any potential operational or workload issues, and resolve any concerns or questions the employee may have.

Upon learning of an anticipated leave, department heads are strongly urged to discuss interim staffing needs and concerns with the Personnel Department and the City Manager's Office. Every effort will be made to provide departments with the assistance necessary to maintain an optimal level of service.

### Implementation

This policy will be effective November 1, 2015.

Ongoing Evaluation/Assessment

The City intends to evaluate this policy on an ongoing basis after its implementation in order to ensure that we are both supporting our employees and continuing to provide a high level of service to the Cambridge community. We anticipate that some clarifications or modifications may be necessary.

If you have any questions, please contact the Personnel Department at (617) 349-4332 or send an email to [ParentalLeave@cambridgema.gov](mailto:ParentalLeave@cambridgema.gov).

**REQUEST FOR PARENTAL LEAVE**

Employees seeking paid parental leave under the City's Parental Leave Policy must complete this form and submit it to their Department Head or his/her designee. This will ensure that the paid leave is properly credited to the employee's leave balances and will help to facilitate a discussion regarding any questions the employee may have. Please consult the Parental Leave Policy for details regarding eligibility requirements.

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected date of birth/adoption/foster placement: \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated duration of leave: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that FMLA paperwork or other documentation may be required, at the discretion of your Department Head and/or the Personnel Department. If you already have relevant documentation, you may attach it to this form.

Please use this space to provide any additional information you feel is important (e.g., planned use of sick/vacation time; whether intermittent leave is anticipated, any issues you would like to discuss with your supervisor):

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Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Department Heads: Please ensure that the employee has had an opportunity to discuss the anticipated leave with you or your designee and then sign this form and forward to the City's Personnel Director.**

Department Head Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_