

**Board Policy GARH: Employee Leaves and Absences**

**Status:** ADOPTED

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## **SICK LEAVE**

The Vidalia Board of Education provides paid leave for eligible employees for absences due to sickness or injury, or for medical, dental, or optical diagnosis or treatment. All employees are required to follow the appropriate work calendar established by the Board for their positions and may take leave from work only in accordance with this policy or other leave policies enacted by the Board. Unless otherwise provided by the Board, the superintendent or designee is authorized to rearrange the work calendars of employees. Deductions in pay will be made for absences not covered by this policy. Employees who work full time earn sick leave at the rate of one and one-quarter days of leave for each regular school month worked. Leave will be advanced at the beginning of the school year. An employee must work at least 10 days per month to earn sick leave. When all leave has been exhausted, a salary reduction will be made at the employee's daily rate of earned wages for each day, or portion thereof, of the excess leave.

Employees may accumulate sick leave up to 45 days to protect the employee against loss of income due to extended illness or disability.

No payment is made for accumulated sick leave upon termination of employment.

Intention to use sick leave should be reported as soon as possible to the person's immediate supervisor. Failure of an employee to notify his or her immediate superior by 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the absence will result in a forfeit of pay at the appropriate daily rate for each employee. Absences not covered by leave policy will result in a loss of pay at the appropriate daily rate on each day absent from work.

Sick leave may be used for personal illness or illness or death in the immediate family. Immediate family shall be interpreted to include parent, sibling, child, spouse, grandparent, grandchild, in-law or step equivalents of the same, other relatives subject to the approval of the superintendent, or relative living in the residence of the employee.

### **Limitations on Sick Leave:**

No more than five successive days of sick leave may be used for illness in the immediate family unless extended by the Superintendent or his delegated representative.

The Board of Education reserves the right for its administrators to require employees to submit a doctor's statement in writing that the employee was unable to work during the time(s) absent from school.

Sick leave following back or head injury, heart problems, or any surgery will require a doctor's release to return to work with stated restrictions if any. It is the employee's responsibility to inform the doctor of work duties.

Elective medical surgical procedures should be scheduled off school time whenever possible. Such procedures, when scheduled during school time, shall be charged to personal leave.

## **PERSONAL LEAVE**

A maximum of three- (3) day's short-term personal leave shall be available to all personnel. Such leave may be used for personal or professional reasons, provided prior approval of his/her absence is given by the superintendent or his authorized representative. Such leave shall be deducted from the employee's accumulated sick leave.

Requests for personal leave immediately preceding or following holidays or pre and post planning days are to be referred to the Superintendent's office.

Approval for personal leave shall not be conditioned upon disclosure of the purpose of the leave, nor may the person requesting the leave be denied personal leave because of failure or refusal to disclose why the leave is requested.

The Principal or Superintendent can refuse to allow an employee to take personal or professional leave qualified substitutes are not available.

## **PAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

The Board of Education shall make paid parental leave equally available to all eligible employees of the Board of Education under the following terms:

An employee of the Board of Education shall be eligible for paid parental leave for qualifying life events upon satisfying the following criteria:

1. The employee is classified as full-time by the District and is eligible to participate in the TRS (Teacher Retirement System of Georgia) or the PSERS (Public School Employees Retirement System); and
2. The employee has six continuous months of employment with the Board, regardless of whether he or she is eligible for paid or unpaid leave under federal law. An employee paid on an hourly basis must have worked a minimum of 700 hours over the six-month period immediately preceding the requested paid parental leave date.

A qualifying life event means:

1. The birth of a child of an eligible employee;
2. The placement of a minor child for adoption with an eligible employee; or
3. The placement of a minor child for foster care with an eligible employee.

The maximum amount of paid parental leave that may be taken by an eligible employee during a rolling 12-month period is 120 hours, regardless of the number of qualifying life events that occur during such period.

1. The rolling 12-month period shall be measured backward from the date an eligible employee first uses parental leave.
2. Parental leave may be taken as needed and may be taken in increments of less than eight hours. The smallest increment of parental leave that may be taken is two hours.
3. Any unused paid parental leave that remains 12 months after the qualifying event shall not carry over for future use.
4. Unused paid parental leave shall have no cash value at any time of the eligible employee's separation from employment with the Board of Education.

Paid parental leave under state law shall run concurrently with any leave provided under federal law.

Eligible employees requesting paid parental leave must submit the district's designated form to the Superintendent or designee within two weeks of the requested leave start date.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop paperwork needed to administer paid parental leave, which shall specify the documentation needed to establish the existence of a qualifying life event.

## **PROFESSIONAL LEAVE**

Personnel may formally request professional leave at full pay to attend specific activities or receive advanced training. Examples of reasons for which professional leave may be granted include, but are not limited to, in-service training and for purposes of attending meetings of professional associations.

The formal request should be approved by the superintendent prior to the requested absence. Approval of the request does not commit the district to payment of any expenses. The applying staff member must submit a separate request in detail if he/she desires financial assistance.

The request for professional leave must first be submitted to the principal or other designated official before being considered by the superintendent.

## **JURY DUTY OR WITNESS LEAVE**

Each employee shall be allowed leave with pay for the purposes of serving as a juror in any court or when attending a judicial proceeding in response to a subpoena or other court order or process that requires the employee's attendance at the judicial proceeding in a work-related matter. Jury and/or witness leave shall not be deducted from an individual's accumulated personal, professional or sick leave. No employee utilizing jury or witness leave shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute to serve during his or her absence for such leave. Employees who

serve on juries or who are subpoenaed to attend a judicial proceeding in a work-related matter may keep any jury/witness pay they receive.

### **MILITARY LEAVE**

All employees are entitled to paid leave not to exceed eighteen days in any one federal fiscal year for the purpose of complying with ordered military duty with the armed forces of the United States or State of Georgia, including duty as a voluntary member of the National Guard or any reserve component of the United States or State of Georgia. In the event the Governor declares an emergency that results in an employee being ordered to military duty as a member of the National Guard, the employee is entitled to leave not exceeding thirty days in any one federal fiscal year. Employees who have military commitments shall inform the Superintendent or designee annually, provide a copy of the official military orders, and cooperate to the extent possible in scheduling such leave so as to minimize the disruption in those employees' duties and the mission of the Board of Education.

### **RELIGIOUS LEAVE**

#### **Observance of religious holidays:**

Reasonable accommodations to the religious needs of the employee shall be made where such accommodations can be made without undue hardships on the school system operation.

Employees may use personal leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays. If an employee desires to take leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays in excess of the days allowed for personal leave, the employee may take unpaid leave for such purposes, provided that such leave is not excessive and does not interfere with fulfilling the obligations of his or her job.

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