

## ***Maternity Leave Benefit and Salary Questions***

### **Forms to be Completed for Requesting Leave: (Available on LSD website or from Payroll)**

#### **What Forms Do I Complete for My Maternity Leave?**

Complete a Leave Request form and attach a doctor's note.

Complete the Family Medical Leave Form (FMLA) if you have worked for 1,250 hours or more in the past 12 months.

Complete a Shared Leave Request form if you do not have enough sick leave and want to request shared leave.

### **Benefit Information:**

**What is FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act)?** FMLA is a federal law that provides up to 12 weeks of leave and benefits to employees who need to care for themselves or certain family members in the event of birth, adoption, or a serious health condition. You are eligible for FMLA leave if you have been employed by Lynden School District (LSD) for at least one year and have worked 1,250 hours or more in the most recent 12 months. The District would continue its contribution for your benefits for up to 12 weeks. Your share of the monthly premiums, if any, would continue to be paid by you. If your approved leave goes past the end of the 12-week FMLA period, District contributions would end.

**What is WFLA (Washington Family Leave Act)?** WFLA is very similar to FMLA, in that it has the same eligibility requirements. However, it provides additional leave time for pregnant women.

**What is WPFML? (Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave)** Under Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) law, eligible employees will be entitled to paid leave up to 12 weeks for their own serious health condition (medical leave) or for family care (family leave), up to 16 weeks combined family and medical leave, and up to 2 additional weeks for certain pregnancy complications.

**How Long Does Maternity Leave Last?** Maternity leave typically begins when your baby is born and lasts 6-8 weeks (6 weeks for a vaginal delivery or 8 weeks for a caesarean delivery), but can include a period of time before childbirth, if medical conditions related to your pregnancy prevent you from working. You may use your available sick leave if you have a medical condition prior to the birth that is related to your pregnancy that will prevent you from working, but it may (depending on your union contract) count as part of your total 12 weeks of FMLA that is available to you for the school year. You may use your available sick leave for your maternity leave. You may request shared sick leave if you do not have sick leave available.

**What Happens to My Benefits While I am on Leave?** The District contribution toward the cost of your employee benefits will continue as long as you either are in a paid status, or as long as your leave is qualified as FMLA/WFLA.

**What if I Don't Qualify for FMLA?** If you do not qualify for FMLA, you will be required to use any paid leave available during your maternity leave. When this paid leave ends, your district benefit contribution ends as well. See "When Do My Benefits End?" below for details. You can still take your 6-8 weeks of maternity leave, but if you run out of sick leave, your benefits will end.

**When Do My Benefits End?** If you are eligible for FMLA/WFLA your benefits will end on the last day of the month of your FMLA/WFLA leave, unless you return to work. If you are not eligible for FMLA/WFLA leave, and have paid leave for your 6-8 week maternity leave, your benefits will end if you do not return to work. If you go on unpaid status on or before the 15th of the month, benefits end at the end of that same month; if your unpaid status begins after the 15th of the month, benefits end at the end of the following month. When benefits end, you will have the opportunity to go onto COBRA.

**What Can I Do To Keep My Benefits When My District Contributions End?** When benefits end, you will receive a letter offering you the opportunity for COBRA insurance benefits. You can continue your benefits under COBRA by paying the full premium each month. The COBRA period is usually 18 months but can be longer.

**What if I Need More Time with My Baby?** LSD bargaining agreements allow for up to a year of Leave of Absence without Pay. This provides time during the 12 months following birth (or placement by adoption) to care for your new child. A Leave of Absence without Pay is always an unpaid leave, but if you also qualify for FMLA, District benefit contributions would continue for up to 12 weeks. If your Leave of Absence without Pay goes past the end of the FMLA period, District benefit contributions will end, and you will become eligible to continue benefits under COBRA insurance.

**How Do I Enroll My New Baby on My Insurance Plans?** If you wish to enroll your new baby on your medical plan, you must complete the appropriate enrollment form(s) and submit it to the Payroll Department as soon as possible and no later than 60 days of your baby's birth. You do not need to wait for your baby's social security number to add him or her to your plan. You will be responsible for paying any premium that exceeds the District benefit contribution. You will want to enroll your new baby on dental through the dental website. You will want to complete an enrollment form to add your new baby to vision.

**Where Do I Find the Enrollment Forms?** These forms are available from the Payroll Department or online at the LSD website. You may also call Payroll at 354-4443, #2, to have the forms sent to you. To find the forms online or receive more information on your benefit coverage, go to our district website under Payroll/Benefits.

**What Should I Do When I Return From Leave?** If you received District benefit contributions throughout your leave, you will not need to do anything about your benefits when you return. However, if you have been on COBRA insurance, or if you have allowed your benefits to lapse, you must complete the appropriate enrollment form(s). You must submit your completed form(s) to Payroll by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month immediately following your return to work to reinstate your coverage as an active employee. Otherwise, you will have to wait until the next open enrollment period the following school year.

### **Salary Information:**

**When Do I Start to Use My Available Sick Leave?** Available sick leave begins the day your baby is born and following that for 6-8 weeks (6 weeks for a vaginal delivery or 8 weeks for a caesarean delivery). You may also use available sick leave if you have medical conditions related to your pregnancy prior to the birth that prevent you from working under FMLA.

**Can I Use My Sick Leave After the 6-8 Weeks Maternity Leave?** Not unless you have a complication due to the delivery.

**What Happens to My Unused Personal Days?** Any unused personal days will automatically be applied before you are on a leave without pay status.

**Can I Continue to Work Any Mandatory/Extended Days While on Maternity Leave and/or FMLA Leave?** You are not eligible to work mandatory or extended days during the period of maternity, Family Medical Leave or extended maternity leave. You may sign up to work as a substitute after your doctor releases you to return to work. You may not use sick leave once you are released to work.

**What If I Am Out of Sick/Personal/Vacation Leave?** If your leave results in unpaid status, and you are on FMLA your checks will be divided over the FLMA period. If you are on unpaid leave without FMLA you will receive all compensation due on all contracts on the paycheck following your last paid day. Compensation will resume when you return to work. The payroll cut off is the 15<sup>th</sup> of any month. If you want a check in the month you return, you will need to return to work by the 15<sup>th</sup>. Please keep in mind your paychecks will be smaller when you return to work because there are less months to distribute salary for your summer paychecks.

**What If I Have Optional Payroll Deductions Taken Out of My Paycheck Such As Flex Plan, Credit Union, 403B, etc.?** You will need to make the appropriate adjustments for previously arranged payroll deductions in the event that you do not receive a paycheck in any given month, such as flex plan, credit union, 403b, etc. You will need to contact these companies to inform them that they will need to stop deductions if you will not be receiving a paycheck.

**When is the Last Day I Can Return to Work Prior to the Summer?** If you are on leave during the spring, you may return to work if there are fifteen (15) or more student days remaining in the school year, providing you have been medically released by your physician.

**Contact DeeEtta Pullar in Payroll for more information.**