

Bereavement Leave for University Staff Employees

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Status Final

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Policy Type [University](#)

Contact Office

[Benefits and Leave Center](#) [Employee Relations](#)

Oversight Executive

[Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer](#)

Applies To

Academic Division The College at Wise

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Reason for Policy

The University recognizes that the death of a loved one is an exceedingly challenging time for our employees. To support University staff employees during this time, the University provides bereavement leave time off from work for making funeral-related arrangements, settling family affairs, bereavement, attending the funeral or memorial service of a member of their immediate family, and to provide for a consistent benefit and uniform application across the University.

Definition of Terms

Bereavement Leave

Leave taken by an eligible University staff employee due to the death of a family member, loved one, or pregnancy loss.

Paid Leave

There are two types of paid leave available to University staff employees:

1. Leave time determined at a variable rate that is based on an employee's years of service, the use of which usually is approved in advance by the employee's supervisor and may be used for **any purpose** including but not limited to vacation, personal and family illness, bereavement, attend to personal business, etc., but requiring no specific justification or explanation by the employee. This is referred to throughout the policy as paid leave.
2. Leave time provided at a predetermined rate, the use of which is approved in advance by the employee's supervisor and must be used for the specific purpose for which it was intended (e.g., Civil and Work-Related Leave, School Assistance and Volunteer Service Leave, etc.).

Policy Statement

Upon request, it is the policy of the University to provide paid bereavement leave to an eligible University staff employee in the event of the death of a member of the eligible employee's immediate family (see Section 1.b.ii) or pregnancy loss. Paid bereavement leave provides a University staff employee with time to grieve, attend funeral services or a memorial, or deal with financial and legal matters that may arise after death.

1. Eligibility:

A University staff employee must meet both of the following criteria, all of which must be met as of the date of the request for bereavement leave.

- a. The employee is employed full-time or part-time in a benefits-eligible position as of the date of the request for bereavement leave.
- b. The leave is due to:
 - i. Pregnancy loss (by the employee, their spouse, their partner, or their surrogate).
 - ii. The death of a member of the eligible employee's immediate family, which includes the following persons:
 - Parents (including stepparents, in-laws, and in loco parentis (a person who stood in place of a parent)).
 - Spouse or partner.
 - Children (including step, adoptive, foster child or ward, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law).
 - Siblings (including step-siblings, siblings-in-law).
 - Grandparents.
 - Grandchildren.
 - Any person living in the eligible employee's household.
 - Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

[Note: Herewith referred to as an eligible employee throughout.]

A University staff employee who is in unpaid status (e.g., unpaid personal leave, unpaid education leave, unpaid furlough) is not eligible for paid bereavement leave benefits.

2. **Leave Amount/Usage:**

A benefits-eligible employee will be granted a maximum of three days (24 hours based on full-time employment, pro-rated for part-time) of paid bereavement leave for each occurrence of death in the eligible employee's immediate family. Paid bereavement leave cannot be taken intermittently.

An eligible employee will receive 100% of their regular salary while on paid bereavement leave. Bereavement leave is paid on a regular, straight-time basis, and is not counted as time worked when computing overtime.

Should the death of an eligible employee's immediate family member occur while the University staff employee is on a scheduled paid leave, the employee should immediately notify their immediate supervisor so that necessary time off (up to the maximums mentioned above) may be charged to paid bereavement leave.

Unused paid bereavement leave is not compensable (paid out) if the University staff employee:

- No longer meets the criteria for eligibility as set forth in **Section 1. Eligibility**.
- Separates from employment. Paid bereavement leave ceases on the effective date of a termination or layoff (i.e., the last day of work). A University staff employee recalled to active employment from layoff status will again be eligible for the benefits provided under this policy.

3. **Coordination with Other Available Leaves/Benefits:**

a. **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA):**

The *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA) does not extend to bereavement leave. FMLA does give an eligible employee the right to take unpaid time off work to care for a family member with a serious health condition. However, that time is only for providing care. If the family member passes away, the right to take FMLA leave ends. Although FMLA leave is not a form of bereavement leave, it may be possible for some employees to utilize it at times of loss for grief counseling or for mental health.

When an eligible University staff employee is on FMLA leave to care for a family member and the leave is terminated by the death of the family member, the employee can request paid bereavement leave as described above.

While bereavement leave is not covered by FMLA, the law mandates leave to address issues that arise when an employee's covered family member (spouse, child, or parent) dies on active military duty.

b. **Paid Leave:**

Paid bereavement leave will not be deducted from the eligible employee's accrued paid leave balances.

c. **Paid Parental Leave:**

Paid parental leave is available for a University staff member who meets the criteria in [HRM-013.02: Paid Parental Leave for University Staff Employees](#), Section 1. Eligibility. Paid parental leave shall run consecutively with bereavement leave.

d. Other University Leave:

If a paid bereavement leave day falls on an official University holiday, the eligible employee will receive holiday pay in lieu of a paid bereavement leave day, provided the eligible employee is in pay status the day before and the day after the official University holiday. The paid University holiday will not count against (i.e., shorten) the eligible employee's authorized paid bereavement leave period.

e. Benefits Continuation and Contributions:

Because an eligible employee remains in full pay status during approved paid bereavement leave, the University will continue to pay the employer portion of previously elected benefits during paid bereavement leave. The eligible employee will remain responsible for the employee portion. The eligible employee will continue to earn service credit and will have retirement contributions paid by the University during the approved paid bereavement leave.

4. Notice and Procedures:

- a. Paid bereavement leave is arranged between the University staff employee and their immediate supervisor.
- b. The eligible employee must request paid bereavement leave and their immediate supervisor must approve or disapprove such time off as soon as practical under the circumstances. Supervisory approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- c. The immediate supervisor may not deny the use of paid bereavement leave or require the employee take paid bereavement leave utilizing accrued paid leave or leave without pay (LWOP) without approval of Employee Relations.
- d. If possible, the eligible employee should provide their immediate supervisor with as much advance notice as possible. When advance notice is not possible, the eligible employee must give verbal or written notice within 24 hours after commencement of the leave. This notice may be given by any other person on behalf of an eligible employee taking unforeseeable paid bereavement leave.
- e. The immediate supervisor shall approve and appropriately document requests for paid bereavement leave, extended paid bereavement leave utilizing accrued paid leave, or LWOP in the University human resources management system (HRMS).

5. Documentation:

For bereavement leave requests, the University may require an eligible employee to provide documentation identifying the deceased individual and verifying the relationship. Documentation requested may include a death certificate; a published obituary; or written verification of death, burial, or memorial services from a mortuary, funeral home, burial society, cremation, religious institution, or

government agency. If requested, the eligible employee must provide the requested documentation within three days after returning to work following their paid bereavement leave or bereavement leave utilizing accrued paid leave or LWOP.

An eligible employee may be denied paid bereavement leave if they fail to provide their immediate supervisor with requested verification of the relationship and death.

6. **Requesting Additional Time Off:**

A University staff employee may request additional time off to be charged against accrued paid leave or as authorized LWOP. This extension of bereavement leave requires the approval of the employee's immediate supervisor. These situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

The University strongly encourages supervisors to be flexible in granting requests for additional paid bereavement leave utilizing accrued paid leave (as available and appropriate) and LWOP beyond the paid bereavement leave provisions herein.

7. **Responsibilities:**

The *eligible employee* is responsible for:

- Submitting bereavement leave in the HRMS or notifying their immediate supervisor of the date(s) and time(s) for which paid bereavement leave is being requested. Such notification must be provided at the earliest opportunity.
- Timely submitting a request to their immediate supervisor if additional leave is being requested to be charged against accrued paid leave or as authorized LWOP.
- Providing, if requested, documentation verifying the relationship and death to the immediate supervisor.
- Contacting Employee Relations for assistance if the employee believes a request for bereavement leave was inappropriately denied by their supervisor or if they are seeking to utilize bereavement leave for an individual who does not meet the criteria for eligibility as set forth in **Section 1b**.

The *supervisor* is responsible for:

- Providing timely approval or denial of requests for paid bereavement leave, bereavement leave charged against accrued paid leave, or as authorized LWOP.
- Accurately documenting approval or denial of requests for paid bereavement leave and other bereavement leave requests in the applicable University HRMS.
- Obtaining approval from Employee Relations before denying requests for paid bereavement leave, additional time off to be charged against accrued paid leave, or authorized LWOP.

Employee Relations is responsible for:

- Reviewing the responsible supervisor's denial of the employee's request for paid bereavement leave or to extend bereavement leave (to be charged against accrued paid leave or LWOP) in situations involving the death of an immediate family member.
- Assisting the eligible employee if the employee believes a request for bereavement leave was inappropriately denied by their supervisor or if they are seeking to utilize bereavement leave for an individual who does not meet the criteria for eligibility as set forth in **Section 1b**.
- Providing timely approval or denial of bereavement leave policy exception requests.

8. **Compliance with Policy:**

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy (including, but not limited to, the notice and documentation specifics set out above) may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination in accordance with relevant University policies.

A University staff employee must comply with all leave request procedures, absent unusual circumstances. Failure to do so may be grounds for delaying or denying the University staff employee's request for paid bereavement leave.

Questions about this policy should be directed to the [Benefits and Leave Center](#).

Procedures

Request paid bereavement leave in the human resources management system as per **Section 4** of the policy. Contact [Employee Relations](#) if a request for bereavement leave was inappropriately denied by the supervisor or if seeking to utilize bereavement leave for an individual who does not meet the criteria for eligibility as set forth in **Section 1b**.

Related Information

[HRM-013: Available Leave Types for University Staff Employees](#)

[HRM-013.02: Paid Parental Leave for University Staff Employees](#)

[HRM-026: Family, Medical, and Military Leave](#)

[U.S. Office of Personnel Management: Definition of Family Member](#)

Major Category [Human Resource Management](#)

Next Scheduled Review Friday, October 24, 2025

Revision History

Added surrogate to Section 1, added Paid Parental Leave to Section 3 3/6/24.

Applies To Text

Academic Division and the College at Wise.

Last modified March 6, 2024 - 9:52am

Approved By Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer

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