



# **Paid Parental Leave Program**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Employees**

The City of Seattle is pleased to offer paid parental leave (PPL) to employees on May 17, 2015. Eligible employees may use up to four weeks (160 hours) of paid leave to bond with their new child and to support work/life balance during the first year. Birth of a child or placement of a child for adoption or foster care are qualifying events for paid parental leave.

Please read the FAQs below for employees. If you have additional questions or want to start the application process, please contact your department's human resources representative. Additional resources are available online at the [Paid Parental Leave Program webpage](#), or contact Shauna Fitzner in the Seattle Department of Human Resources at [shauna.fitzner@seattle.gov](mailto:shauna.fitzner@seattle.gov).

### **Eligibility**

**1) Q. Who is eligible for PPL?**

A. You are eligible for paid parental leave if you are a regularly appointed or temporary benefits-eligible City employee who has worked for the City for at least six months and have experienced a qualifying event. The six-month period is calculated from your hire date, regardless of temporary, regular, full-time or part-time status.

**2) Q. What are qualifying events for PPL?**

A. The birth of a child or placement of a child for foster care or adoption are qualifying events for the paid parental leave. The child may be your child or your spouse's or domestic partner's child.

**3) Q. How long after the qualifying event would I be eligible to use PPL?**

A. You must use the leave by the first anniversary (12 months) of your child's birth or placement for adoption or foster care.

**4) Q. Am I eligible for PPL for the birth of my child or placement of my child for adoption or foster care that occurred before the legislation becomes effective?**

A. An employee is not eligible for PPL for a birth or placement that happened before May 17, 2015. The qualifying event must have taken place May 17, 2015 or later.

**5) Q. What does "placement" with a child for adoption or foster care mean?**

A. Placement is the act of placing a child with the employee in their home. Adoption is a separate legal process that need not be achieved prior to using the leave.

**6) Q. How often can I be eligible for PPL?**

A. An employee is eligible for up to four weeks (160 hours) of PPL once in a single 12-month period in which a qualifying event occurs. A single 12-month period is measured as 12 months from the initial qualifying event. For example, if you

received placement of your child for adoption on January 1, 2016, you would not be eligible for an additional four weeks of PPL until on or after January 1, 2017 (see also FAQ #10 below).

**7) Q. If I and my spouse/domestic partner both work for the City and we have a new child, are we each eligible to take the full amount of PPL?**

A. Yes, if you and your spouse or domestic partner both work for the City and experience a qualifying event such as birth of your child or placement of your child in your home for adoption or foster care, each of you is eligible to take up to the full four weeks of paid parental leave. The legislation does not prohibit the use of leave by both spouses/domestic partners who work for the City of Seattle.

### Amount of Leave

**8) Q. How much PPL is available if I'm eligible?**

A. Each full-time employee is eligible for four weeks or 160 hours per a single 12-month period. Full-time employees on alternative work schedules (compressed work weeks) are also eligible for 160 hours per a single 12-month period.

**9) Q. I'm a part-time employee. Is PPL pro-rated for part-time employees?**

A. Yes, PPL is pro-rated for part-time employees. If the employee works a fluctuating schedule, the amount of leave credited to the employee is based on the average straight-time hours worked during the preceding 12 months. For example, if an employee worked 1,044 hours in the 12 months preceding the leave (0.5 FTE), they would receive 80 hours of PPL.

**10) Q. If I have two qualifying events during a single 12-month period, how much leave could I use?**

A. If you have two qualifying events during a single 12-month period, you may only use four weeks of PPL once in a single 12-month period. You may use that leave to bond with your children in multiple qualifying events. However, you would not be eligible for an additional four weeks of leave until after the first 12-month period.

Using the example provided in FAQ #6, if a child is placed for adoption or foster care with an employee on January 1, 2016 and then gives birth to a child on July 1, 2016, she is only eligible for four weeks of leave January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016. However, the employee would qualify for an additional four weeks of leave on January 1, 2017 for the birth of her second child. The employee must use that leave by July 1, 2017, the first birthday of her second child.

### Use of Leave

**11) Q. If I am approved for PPL, may I use the leave intermittently?**

A. According to the ordinance, PPL is not to be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule, unless the employee and City agree.

**12) Q. If my department agrees to an intermittent schedule for the use of PPL, in what increments may I take the leave?**

A. Departments have discretion over your intermittent schedule for the use of PPL.

- 13) Q. Can I use PPL in the stages of preparation for adoption such as required travel/visitation to another country?**
- A. The employee can only use PPL once the child has been placed in the home. PPL may not be used for the stages of preparation for adoption or foster placement.

#### **Documentation**

- 14) Q. If I am approved for PPL, will I be required to document my eligibility for the leave?**
- A. Yes, if you are approved to take PPL, you will be required to provide certain documents for the leave; Personnel Rules are pending on acceptable documents. In the meantime, departments will request reasonable documentation that substantiates the use of paid parental leave before authorizing PPL. Birth certificates or documentation that substantiates placement of a child for adoption or foster care with you are considered reasonable documentation.

#### **Return to Work**

- 15) Q. Am I expected to return to work after PPL ends?**
- A. Yes, you are expected to return to work after PPL. You may also have other leaves available to you that would extend your return to work date.
- 16) Q. If I don't return to work after using paid parental leave (as well as associated sick leave, Family Medical Leave (FML), etc.) would the City recover the value of the leave?**
- A. Yes, if an employee fails to return to work after using PPL, the City may recover the value of the leave.

#### **Interaction with Other Leaves**

- 17) Q. Does the paid parental leave run concurrent with FML? Must paid parental leave be designated as FML and count against my FML benefit?**
- A. You may use the leave in addition to available, unpaid FML leave. You could choose to have the paid parental leave designated as FML, but paid parental leave has the same job protections as FML. (Library employees need to verify this FAQ question with the Library's Leave Coordinator. The FML benefit at the Library is different than with the City of Seattle and leaves may run concurrently.)
- 18) Q. Does PPL provide me with job protection?**
- A. Yes, your job is protected while on PPL in a similar manner to the City's FML program.

- 19) Q. Will PPL be administered like FML in that I would gradually earn time back?**  
A. You would not gradually earn PPL time back like FML. Upon approval, you will be credited with PPL hours to be used within one year of the PPL qualifying event. New events will be processed upon request and approval of any new paid parental leave hours will be determined by the department and credited to you as appropriate. You are only eligible for PPL once every 12 months.
- 20) Q. How does PPL interact with donated sick leave?**  
A. Donated sick leave may only be used for an employee's own medical issue (in this case, pregnancy, childbirth or recovery). The intent of PPL is for bonding. Once the employee's application for paid parental leave is approved, they are no longer eligible to received donated sick leave.

### **Health Care Benefits**

- 21) Q. How does PPL interact with my healthcare benefits?**  
A. You will maintain your City healthcare coverage while on PPL as long as you report at least 80 hours of paid leave in a month.
- 22) Q. If I am approved for PPL due to the placement of a child in my home for foster care, will my child be covered on the City's health care plans?**  
A. Placement of a child for foster care in your home does not qualify the child for coverage on the City's health care plans. In order for the child to be covered on the City's plans, you must be awarded legal custody or guardianship of the child.

### **Pay and Time Sheet Completion**

- 23) Q. How would I get paid if I'm approved for PPL? Will there be a new pay code created to use on time sheets?**  
A. Employees will receive the straight-time rate of pay that they would receive for other paid leave (i.e., vacation or holidays). City Payroll will create new pay codes to enter on your time sheet.