

GREAT NECK TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TIME OFF DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY

- ***When can I use my sick leave during pregnancy (or *spouse's pregnancy)?***

You may use your accumulated sick leave for any part (pre- and post-delivery) of your pregnancy if your physician advises that you should not be working. You may be asked to submit a doctor's certificate if you stop working more than three days prior to your delivery. Generally, recovery from delivery is approximately six to eight weeks. If medically warranted, you may use more sick leave. In such cases, or if you request days from the Sick Leave Fund (if eligible), the district will request a doctor's letter stating that you are medically unable to return to work. If caring for *spouse during any part of the pregnancy (pre- and post-delivery), the contract allows for up to 30 days of sick leave (with medical documentation if requesting more than three days).

According to HIPAA regulations, the district, through HR, is permitted to ask for medical information to support your leave request; a doctor can only release medical information with your authorization.

- ***What if I need more sick leave than I have during my pregnancy or recovery?***

If you have completed five full years of service as a Great Neck teacher and you exhaust your regular accumulated sick leave, you may apply to your assistant superintendent, with medical documentation, to withdraw up to ten days from the Sick Leave Fund for your own recovery. Note: These days do not have to be repaid.

At the beginning of each school year, there are 160 - 190 days in the Fund. If you know that you will not have enough sick days to cover your leave, you may request days from the Fund as soon as your baby is born. In cases of a scheduled caesarean section, you may make your request *two weeks prior to the delivery* with a doctor's note verifying the scheduled date. If the days are available when you need them, they will be granted.

- ***How and when should I inform the district of my pregnancy (or *spouse's pregnancy) and of my plan for absence?***

As soon as you are comfortable doing so, *verbally* inform your building administrator of your (or *spouse's) pregnancy and *probable* plans regarding your leave and return to work so that arrangements can be made for your replacement. Your administrator may advise you about when and how to inform students and parents. If you will be using sick leave, follow the usual procedures (select "Personal illness" from the Aesop dropdown menu, and select "No" for "Substitute Required").

As soon as possible following the birth of your baby, contact the human resources department (HR) to inform them of the birth and of your tentative recovery period (typically six to eight weeks) or time away to care for *spouse and/or baby. This would also be an appropriate time to discuss your plans regarding additional leave time and/or possible return date.

**Spouse includes domestic partner*

- ***What is the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and how does it apply to my leave?***

FMLA is a federally mandated leave that permits you to take up to twelve weeks of **unpaid** leave to care for yourself, an ill family member and/or a newborn child. You do NOT have to take the twelve weeks consecutively, and the six to eight weeks of sick leave you are permitted for delivery and recovery are not included in that time. If caring for a sick family member, the 30 days of sick leave allowed by the contract would not be included in FMLA time either. Note: If your *spouse works for the district, the allowable twelve weeks is combined between the two of you.

- ***What should I do if I plan to take child care leave? For how long may I be on child care leave?***

Child care leave is granted for up to two consecutive years plus the balance of the semester during which the leave commences. Time that you spend on FMLA is not counted in this time frame.

If you are taking child care leave, submit your intention in writing to your assistant superintendent 60 days before the child care leave will begin (or less where medically warranted). **IF** you are fairly certain that you will be taking child care leave, you should inform your building administrator regarding your probable plans. Contact the GNTA Office (516-829-9070) if you need assistance in preparing this written notice.

- ***I notified the district that I would be on child care leave for one school year, but I would like to extend it for another year. What should I do?***

Child care leave is reviewed per school year at a time. Faculty on leave receive notification from HR asking what their intentions are for the following school year.

According to the contract, however, employees are responsible for notifying the district of their intention to return and must do so by February 15: ***“A teacher who does not give such timely notification shall be deemed to have resigned.”*** [Article 33.C]

A request may be made by February 1 for extension of leave for the next school year.

- ***Can I extend child care leave beyond the two years?***

No, but the contract has a provision for dependency leave which may be granted for child care, parent care and long-term illness of family member. Dependency leave is also an unpaid leave, but, unlike child care leave, it is granted *at the discretion* of the district. You must request this in writing at least 60 days prior to the start of the leave (except in the event of an emergency), and it is subject to Board of Education approval.

The faculty member is responsible for the same notification requirements when returning from or requesting an extension while on dependency leaves [see Article 32.D].

**Spouse includes domestic partner*

- ***What are my disability benefits during pregnancy?***

Your accumulated sick leave and possible days from the Sick Leave Fund (if eligible) are your *short-term disability benefits*, which provide full salary and benefits. You may have also chosen long-term disability insurance, an optional benefit for which deductions for a premium have been made from your paychecks. There is a waiting period (90-360 calendar days) before benefits begin, so long-term disability is not usually used for conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth. Contact the GNTA Benefit Trust Fund Office (516-829-9086) for questions about your coverage under long-term disability insurance.

- ***What about my health insurance and other benefits during an unpaid leave?***

While on family medical leave, you will continue your benefits on the same cost basis as when you were working. With child care or dependency leave, you must pay the full cost of any benefits you wish to continue during your leave. In all cases, you will be billed for the coverage. As soon as possible following the birth of your baby, contact the Benefits Administrator in order to add your child for coverage.

For questions about your health insurance benefits, contact the Benefits Administrator at 516-441-4037. For questions about other benefits (e.g., dental, vision, life, etc.), contact the GNTA Benefit Trust Fund Office (516-829-9086).

- ***Does taking an unpaid leave affect my employment status?***

With any unpaid leave, you do NOT accrue longevity, seniority or sick days. If you are a probationary employee, your probationary period will be extended for the amount of time that you are on child care or dependency leave. Note: Time taken on family medical leave will not affect your probationary period.

- ***What if I would like to return to work on a part-time basis while I am on unpaid leave?***

During child care or dependency leave, you may work as a per diem teacher or as a regular substitute. You may also work part-time, if a part-time position is available. It is *extremely important* that you are officially recognized by Board of Education action as being on leave from your full-time position if you work less than full time while you are on child care leave. Contact the GNTA office and/or HR with any questions about your status before accepting any part-time position during child care leave.

- ***Is there any additional information I should be aware of before returning from an unpaid leave?***

#1: Consider your return date wisely. Count the number of school days in that month. If you work **half or fewer** of them, you'll be paid 1/200th of your salary for only those days you worked. If you work **more** than half those days, you'll be paid 1/10th of your salary (if you are paid 20 checks per year) or 1/12th of your salary (if you are paid 24 checks per year) minus 1/200th of your salary for each day you didn't work during that month. This can be a substantial difference in salary, so if you're not sure how to figure this, call the GNTA office for help.

Note: Whether or not there are recess days during the month makes no difference to the way the formula works.

#2: The current GNTA Contract has the following provision regarding return from more than five successive years on unpaid leaves:

Any unit member who is on an unpaid leave of absence under any provision of Article 30, 31, 32, or 33, except leave provided under Article 30.A, where such leave of absence extends for more than 5 consecutive years, shall, upon their return from leave to paid employment be placed upon the lowest salary step within their salary class that will provide a salary increase compared to their annual salary at the time their leave commenced, even if such step shall be the same as or below the step they were on at the time their leave commenced.

Please contact the GNTA Office and/or HR with ANY questions you have or if you would like assistance with any leave requests.

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