

msu human resources Benefits

December 2010

FMLA/Leave Update

Notice to MSU Employees of Changes in Processing FMLA Requests

This notice is to inform all employees of Michigan State University about some important changes in the way Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requests are handled. Please note that legal requirements surrounding FMLA requests have not changed, only the manner in which leave requests and leaves are processed at MSU is changing.

The following Questions and Answers will help you understand what FMLA is, how the process of applying for an FMLA leave is changing, and why those changes are being made. If you have questions after reviewing this document, please contact FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu or call 517-353-4434 or 800-353-4434.

WHAT IS FMLA?

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 is a federal law enacted to help employees balance their work and family life and to promote the stability and economic security of families. It allows eligible employees to take job-protected unpaid leave, or substitute appropriate paid leave if the employee has accrued balances, for up to a total of 12 workweeks during a 12-month period (July 1 - June 30) for an eligible family member or qualifying personal serious health condition. Military service members and their families also are eligible for FMLA leaves under certain circumstances. To be eligible for taking a leave under FMLA, an employee must have been employed at the University for a total of 12 months (may have been intermittent employment) and have worked at least 1,250 work hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of FMLA leave. The law is complex and the above text is only intended to be a brief description. You can find more detailed information about FMLA leaves and eligibility requirements on the MSU Human Resources website at www.hr.msu.edu.

WHAT CHANGES DO EMPLOYEES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT?

In the past, the first step to applying for an FMLA leave was to talk to your supervisor and/or office manager. Supervisors would then walk employees through the initial steps of determining eligibility and helping the employee apply for a leave and then manage the processing of forms.

Effective December 1, after notifying your supervisor, contacting the MSU Benefits office should be your next step to determine your eligibility or apply for an FMLA leave. To initiate the leave process, call MSU Benefits at 517-353-4434 or 800-353-4434 and ask to schedule an appointment with the FMLA/Leave Team to fill out FMLA forms. You also may begin the process by sending your request via e-mail to FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu. A Human Resources representative will meet with you to determine your eligibility, inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the act and help you begin completing the required documents. The FMLA/Leave Team at Human Resources also will help you navigate the process that is required for you to return to work after your leave. HR will discuss the leave with the employee's department as necessary throughout the process so the department will know what to expect in terms of how long the employee will likely be off work and any work restrictions the employee may have when released to return to work. HR will share only information necessary for the unit to accommodate

Questions and Answers About FMLA Processing Changes

an approved leave and will minimize the sharing of information about the employee's health condition to the extent possible.

WHAT HAS CHANGED THAT SUPERVISORS NEED TO KNOW?

FMLA processing functions for all faculty, academic staff and support staff are now being centralized in the MSU Benefits office instead of being managed independently by departments and units at MSU.

Once these changes take effect, supervisors and unit HR administrators will no longer be responsible for processing FMLA leave requests. If an employee comes to you with questions about their FMLA rights or wants to initiate an FMLA leave, you should immediately refer that employee to MSU Human Resources Benefits at 517-353-4434 or 800-353-4434. The employee can also e-mail the FMLA/Leave Team at FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu or schedule an appointment to visit the MSU Benefits office in Suite 140 Nisbet Building. Release time will be granted for these appointments and they should take approximately 20 minutes.

WHEN WILL THESE CHANGES TAKE EFFECT?

As of December 1, 2010, all FMLA leave requests for support staff, faculty and academic staff will be processed by the Benefits Office. This includes processing all required FMLA documentation as well as approving or denying the request. Several departments, such as Residential and Hospitality Services and Physical Plant, volunteered to begin this transition prior to December 1, 2010 as part of a pilot group. The FMLA/Leave team is working with these units separately and those pilot programs are underway.

WHY ARE THESE CHANGES BEING MADE?

Centralizing all FMLA functions into one office will offer several advantages, including:

- It will offer employees requesting FMLA leaves a higher level of confidentiality of their medical information.
- It will ensure all FMLA requests are processed consistently at MSU and that all employees seeking leaves receive consistent and accurate information about FMLA.
- It will relieve departments of the burden of managing the complex FMLA process.
- It will allow the University to better utilize the new SAP (HR/Payroll) system that will go live on December 28, 2010.

WILL THERE BE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE?

FMLA leave processing training is currently available for MSU departments. To schedule a training, please contact the FMLA/Leave Team at FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu. Employee training will be available at a future date.

FOR QUESTIONS ON FMLA LEAVE PROCESSING AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE UPDATES

MSU Benefits Office, FMLA/Leave Team

1407 S. Harrison Road, Suite 140

East Lansing, Michigan 48823

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Fax: 517-353-1869

E-mail Address: FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu

Other Leave-Related Updates

LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR SUPPORT STAFF

The processing of leaves of absence for support staff is now being completed by the Benefits office. Prior to this time, leaves of absence were processed by Employee Records. It is important to note that the current approval process has not changed. Departments who have questions regarding the provisions and processing for leaves of absence for support staff should contact the FMLA/Leave Team at FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR FACULTY AND ACADEMIC STAFF

As of November 1, 2010, the processing of leaves of absence for faculty and academic staff is being completed by the Benefits office. Prior to this time, leaves of absence were processed by Academic Human Resources Records. It is important to note that the current approval process has not changed. Departments who have questions regarding the provisions and processing for leaves of absence for faculty and academic staff should contact the FMLA/Leave Team at FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu.

EBS SYSTEMS WILL AFFECT TIME REPORTING FOR LEAVES FOR SUPPORT STAFF

With implementation of the new EBS systems, the HR Attendance system will soon be replaced by the new Cross Application Time Sheet (CATS) system on December 28, 2010. In preparation for the transition to the new system, time reporting will be handled differently in December.

As a result, Wednesday, December 22 is the cutover date for entries to be made in the HR Attendance System. This will be the last day to record or approve December 2010 absences in the HR Attendance System.

Hourly labor employees in Physical Plant and Residential and Hospitality Services will not be required to enter time in the new CATS system. They will continue to scan in and out on a time clock which will be captured in the new system.

For employees who are paid biweekly:

- Enter all absences or planned time off from December 1 - December 18 in the HR Attendance system. The deadline for entering time taken during this time frame is 5 p.m. on December 22.
- Attendances and absences after December 18 must be entered in the new CATS system.

For employees who are paid monthly:

- Enter all absences or planned time off from December 1 - December 31 in the HR Attendance system. The deadline for entering time taken during this time frame is 5 p.m. on December 22.
- Time taken after December 31, 2010 must be entered in the new CATS system.

FMLA LEAVE BALANCES WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL JULY 1 IN EBS SYSTEMS

When the new EBS systems go live, FMLA leave balances will not be immediately available for viewing in the HR/Payroll System. That information will become available in the HR/Payroll System in July. If departments or individual employees need to find out what their FMLA balances are, they can contact the FMLA/Leave team at 517-353-4434 or FMLAleave@hr.msu.edu. It also is important to note that until a leave is actually approved by the FMLA/Leave team, units must continue entering employee absences for support staff. Once a leave is officially approved, the FMLA/Leave team takes over entering the time off in the HR/Payroll System.

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Important Updates on FMLA and Leaves of Absence Inside!

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