



Municipality of Skagway

MEMO

TO:	Health, Education, and Welfare Committee
FROM:	Emily Deach, Deputy Borough Manager
DATE:	May 1, 2024
SUBJECT:	Review of Family Leave Benefits

Thank you for granting Administration's request for a review of the Municipality's family leave benefits. The following bullet points should help inform your discussion, with staff recommendations at the end.

- A. Pursuant to the current Personnel Policy, municipal employees receive the following medical leave benefits:

Vacation Leave (Paid)

- Regular Employees: 15 - 30 days (annual accrual, depending on longevity); 30 – 60 days (max. total accrual, depending on longevity)
- Fire Dept. Employees: 48 - 240 hours (annual accrual, depending on longevity); 96 – 480 hours (max. total accrual, depending on longevity)

Sick Leave (Paid)

- Regular Employees: 15 days annual accrual; 45 days max. total accrual
- Fire Dept. Employees: 168 hours annual accrual; 1,080 hours max. total accrual

Family Medical Leave Act (Unpaid)

- 12 weeks annually for health conditions, childbirth, adopted/foster child, active duty (MOS is required to maintain health insurance)
- 26 weeks annually for care of serious injuries

Alaska Family Medical Leave Act (Unpaid)

- 18 weeks bi-annually for serious health conditions, childbirth, adopted/foster child (MOS is not required to maintain health insurance)

Family Leave Benefits (Paid)¹

- 10 working days annual maximum
- Must qualify for Family Medical Leave Act
- Must fully use accrued vacation and sick leave prior to utilizing Family Leave Benefits
- May only utilize benefit once every two calendar years

¹ https://www.skagway.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/ordinance/47153/res_21-31r_personnel_policy_amendment_family_leave.pdf

B. The average recovery/treatment time for common medical needs are:

- Traditional birth – 6 to 8 weeks (42 – 56 days)
- C-section birth – 12 weeks (84 days)
- Commonly treated cancers – 6 to 26 weeks (42 – 182 days)²

C. Following are some discussion points regarding paid family leave:

- More than 120 countries offer paid maternity leave; the United States does not offer paid maternity leave.³
- Municipality of Anchorage recently approved 4 weeks of paid parental leave for municipal employees.⁴
- City and Borough of Juneau recently approved 6 weeks of paid parental leave for municipal employees.⁵
- The Alaska State Legislature is considering HB 100, which would give state employees 18 weeks of paid family leave.⁶
- Paid family leave can serve as a recruitment and retention tool for employers.
- 12 weeks represents almost 25% of an employee's annual income. Unpaid family leave reduces the employee's ability to accommodate medical bills during leave. For Skagway residents, this includes the unavoidable costs of transportation to medical care, lodging, and living costs while away from home.
- The Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor published a Fact Sheet that is helpful to understand the benefits of Paid Family and Medical Leave.⁷

D. Recommendations:

- Consider removing the requirement in the Personnel Policy requiring an employee to exhaust all accrued vacation time before utilizing Paid Family Leave.
- Consider amending the Personnel Policy to allow for more Paid Family Leave. Administration could be directed to do additional research as needed.
- Consider removing the eligibility requirement from Paid Family Leave stating the 12-month period does not include probationary periods.

² <https://bmccancer.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12885-021-07923-4#:~:text=The%20median%20duration%20of%20therapy,and%20recovery%20time%20between%20modalities.>

³ <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/more-120-nations-provide-paid-maternity-leave#:~:text=The%20countries%20that%20provide%20the,and%20Romania%20%E2%80%93%2016%20weeks%20each.>

⁴ <https://www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/PressReleases/Pages/Assembly-Unanimously-Approves-Paid-Parental-Leave-Benefit.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.juneauempire.com/news/city-adds-funding-for-paid-parental-leave-incentive-for-employees/>

⁶ <https://akhouse.org/2024/02/05/alaska-family-paid-leave-plan-advances-from-house-labor-commerce-committee/>

⁷ <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/paid-leave/PaidLeavefactsheet.pdf>