

City of Cambridge Parental Leave Policy

(Effective Thursday, February 1, 2024)

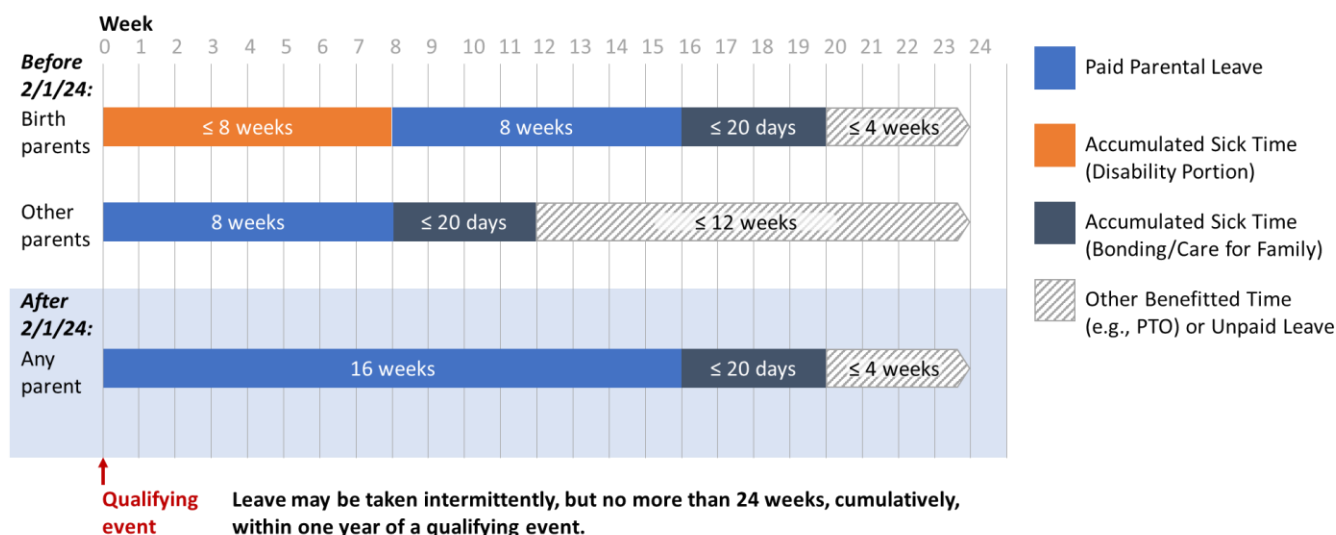
The City of Cambridge is committed to the health and well-being of our employees. By doubling the City's Paid Parental Leave from eight weeks to sixteen weeks, we are improving a benefit that supports our employees and their families. This enhanced policy further demonstrates the City's commitment to improving the employee experience and will ensure that the City continues to attract and retain quality talent to public service.

The City of Cambridge recognizes the vital importance of having time off to recover from childbirth and to care for, nurture and bond with a new child. Therefore, to assist families in these efforts and support employees as they balance work and family life, the City has established the following policy for non-union employees. This policy will apply to union employees only if specifically provided for in collective bargaining agreements.

Non-union employees in regular, benefitted positions may take up to a 24-week leave of absence for the purpose of recovering from pregnancy/childbirth and caring for his or her or their newborn or newly adopted/placed child or children. This leave-of-absence shall apply equally to parents regardless of gender, upon the occurrence of any of the following qualifying events: a natural birth by any method, adoption or foster placement of a child under the age of 18 (or under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled), surrogacy, or stillbirth. As it relates to miscarriage, loss of pregnancy at less than 20 weeks, is considered a pregnancy-related illness therefore not covered by the Parental Leave Policy. Time off associated with pregnancy-related illnesses are covered under the Family Medical Leave Act and the City's Family Sick Leave Policy.

A portion of this 24-week period may be paid using the following forms of benefit time:

- All new parents who meet the eligibility requirements described in the Eligibility for Paid Parental Leave section may be entitled to up to sixteen (16) weeks of paid parental leave, to be taken within the first year of the qualifying event. Weeks are defined based on the employees weekly standard hours. Employees may then use up to 20 days of sick time for the purposes of bonding
- Employees may then use their accrued vacation, personal, compensatory and/or administrative time. See illustration below:



Paid Parental Leave must be used within 12 calendar months following the qualifying event. Paid Parental leave may be used on an intermittent basis, in increments of one work day.

No more than sixteen (16) weeks of Paid Parental Leave will be granted in any twelve (12) month period, regardless of the number of children born, placed or adopted. However, employees who give birth to, adopt or foster more than three children per year may be entitled to an extended Unpaid Leave of Absence, pursuant to Massachusetts state law.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent a parent from using additional accrued sick time prior to the birth provided the appropriate medical documentation is submitted; Essentially, a pregnancy related illness.

Before taking any Unpaid Leave, employees are encouraged to exhaust all other forms of available Paid Leave.

All Paid Parental Leave and any other paid benefit time taken under this policy will run concurrently with any and all available leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”) and the Massachusetts Parental Leave Act (“MPLA”), to the extent permitted by law.

Leave taken within the employee’s probationary period hereby extends the employee’s probationary period by the equivalent amount of time.

Eligibility for Paid Parental Leave

With the implementation of this policy, Paid Parental Leave will be available to all new parents, regardless of gender, upon the occurrence of one of the following qualifying events: a natural birth by any method, adoption, or foster placement of a child under the age of 18 (or under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled), surrogacy, or stillbirth. To be eligible for Paid Parental Leave, an employee must have worked for the City for at least 3 continuous months prior to the qualifying event in a regular, non-union position budgeted to work at least 20 hours per week.

Effective Wednesday, January 1, 2025, to be eligible for Paid Parental Leave, an employee must have worked for the City for at least 12 continuous months prior to the qualifying event in a regular, non-union position budgeted to work at least 20 hours per week.

Notice Requirements

Employees who wish to take Paid Parental Leave must complete the [Parental Leave Request Form](#) and submit it to the Human Resources Department. This form may be submitted as soon as the employee knows the approximate date his/her/their leave will commence. If possible, employees are asked to provide at least 30 days advance notice so that they have an opportunity to discuss their anticipated leave with their supervisor, Department Head or designee, and the Human Resources Department. Such discussions may cover issues such as anticipated length of leave, benefit time balances, required documentation, and status of work projects. This will help to ensure the needs of both the employee and the Department are met.

If 30 days advance notice is not possible, then notice must be provided as soon as is practicable. Prior to using Paid Parental Leave in smaller increments after any initial period of absence, employees are required to provide at least 48 hours' notice, if possible.

Employee Benefits During Leave

Employees will continue to accrue service credit, Sick Leave, Vacation Leave and Personal Time during any paid portion of the leave. For any unpaid portion of the leave, accumulated benefits will be preserved at the level earned as of the commencement of the leave but will not accrue further while the employee is not being paid.

Employees will be responsible for the regular employee share of any health and life insurance premiums during any portion of the leave.

An employee's use of Paid Parental Leave will not affect his/her/their eligibility for Administrative Days or Sick Leave incentive payments. Any use of Sick Leave will continue to impact eligibility for those programs.

Return to Work

The City expects that Department Managers and Supervisors will recognize the challenges associated with becoming a new parent and will support returning employees. Supervisors and returning employees are encouraged to have ongoing discussions, as necessary, regarding an employee's transition back to work.

Employees wishing to temporarily work part-time or on a flexible schedule upon their return are urged to let their Supervisors know of their request with as much advance notice as possible. Employees should also consult the City's Flex Time Policy to become familiar with its guidelines. Requests for flexible or reduced work schedules within the first six months of an employee's return should therefore be given serious consideration, and should generally be approved unless the operational or business needs of the Department cannot be met.

Employees taking time off from work in accordance with this policy will be reinstated to their former position or, in rare cases, to a similar position. While changes in particular work assignments may be necessary, employees' preferences will be taken into account.

Employees are responsible for keeping their Supervisors informed about any changes to their anticipated return to work date. Similar to other leaves, failure to return to work on the designated date of return will be considered a Voluntary Termination of Employment.

Managers' Role

It is vitally important that Department Heads, Managers, and Supervisors support employees who are eligible for leave under this policy. The first step in being able to provide that support is to become familiar with this policy and other City policies that may be helpful to employees trying to balance work and family needs, such as the Policy on Break Time for Nursing Mothers and the Flex Time Policy. Managers should be prepared to help employees understand the benefits that are available to them and should provide employees with assistance in navigating any procedural requirements or expectations. To facilitate smooth transitional periods on both ends of the leave, Managers and employees should work together and discuss the anticipated length of the leave, identify potential operational or workload issues, and resolve concerns or questions the employee may have.

Upon learning of an anticipated leave, Department Heads are strongly urged to discuss interim staffing needs and any other concerns with the Human Resources Department. Every effort will be made to provide Departments with the assistance necessary to maintain an optimal level of service.

Implementation

This policy was originally effective Saturday, November 1, 2015. The expanded policy is effective for qualifying events that occurred on or after Thursday, February 1, 2024.

Ongoing Evaluation/Assessment

The City intends to evaluate this policy on an ongoing basis after its implementation to ensure that we are supporting our employees and continuing to provide a high level of service to the Cambridge community. We anticipate that some clarifications or modifications may be necessary.

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Resources Department at (617) 349-4332 or send an email to HumanResources@cambridgema.gov.