Parental Leave
For Non-Academic Staff

Cornell University is committed to helping staff members balance work life and family life responsibilities through various leave policies. The Parental Leave policy is intended to grant staff members time away from work to care for newborns or newly adopted children and to provide partial salary replacement. Please feel free to call Medical Leaves Administration at (607) 255-1177 if you have additional questions about Parental Leave.

Who Is Eligible for Parental Leave?
Birth mothers and mothers of adoptive children, as well as fathers, domestic partners, and foster parents may take Parental Leave. You are eligible for Parental Leave if you have been employed by the university for at least 12 cumulative months. The 12 months of employment do not have to be consecutive. In addition, you must have been paid for at least 1,000 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the start date of the leave.

Please note birth mothers who are Cornell employees typically use short term disability (STD) first. Short term disability applies during the period of time a birth mother is disabled from working due to the pregnancy. Once the medical care provider has cleared the birth mother to return to work, short term disability benefits cease – and parental leave benefits then typically follow that period. Please see the short term disability policy for more information about STD benefits.

How Much Parental Leave Time Is Available to Me?
You may take up to 16 weeks of Parental Leave in a 12-month period. Your department determines the length of time you are eligible to use under this policy at any given time by tracking leave time that you have taken during the past 12 months of employment. The total of your prior use of Parental Leave within the past twelve months and your current planned usage must not exceed 16 weeks. Furthermore, the length of your Parental Leave may be limited by other leaves you may have taken in the past 12-month period. Please see the full “Parental Leave” policy for complete details or call Medical Leaves Administration at (607) 255-1177.

You may take Parental Leave at any time during the 12-month period, beginning with the birth of a child, commencement of the adoption process, or the placement of a child for foster care.

Requesting Parental Leave
If your department requires a written request, complete the Parental Leave Request Form (www.hr.cornell.edu/benefits/medical_leaves/parental_leave_request.pdf) and give this request form to your supervisor. If the need for the leave is foreseeable, please request the leave from your supervisor at least 30 days in advance.

Will I Need to Provide Medical Documentation?
Medical documentation for a Cornell birth mother will already be on file at the office of Medical Leaves Administration according to short-term disability plan requirements, as outlined in the “Medical Leaves for Staff,” Time Away from Work policy. Appropriate medical, adoptive, or foster care documentation includes a letter from an adoption or foster care agency or from a lawyer in private adoption cases. If the birth mother is not employed at Cornell, the eligible birth parents must provide a letter/script from the physician as proof of the birth.
Will I Receive Compensation While on Parental Leave?
Parents of newborns and adoptive parents are eligible for a partially paid Parental Leave. The university will provide up to four weeks of half pay for employees who are birth parents or adoptive parents. This four-week period of half pay must be taken consecutively. In addition, one staff member/parent in an adoptive family will receive an additional two weeks of half pay to assist him/her in the adoption process. Employees who are registered as same-sex partners with Benefit Services may also qualify for birth or adoptive parent status under this policy.

Foster parents may take advantage of the full 16 weeks of Parental Leave, but there is no salary replacement for foster parents, except through the use of vacation accruals and health and personal leave accruals.

The remaining 12 weeks of the 16 weeks of Parental Leave may be taken as unpaid Parental Leave; however, you can use vacation accruals in order to ensure continued income. See “Use of Accruals,” on next page.

May I Continue My Other Benefit Programs While on Leave?
Yes, you can participate in your benefit programs while you are on approved Parental Leave. Which programs you can continue depend on whether or not you receive a paycheck during the leave from the leave program or by supplementing with your accruals. If you have any questions, you should contact Benefit Services at (607) 255-3936.

What Accruals Can I Use While I Am on the Leave?
A staff member may choose to use accrued vacation or health and personal leave to supplement all or part of parental leave.

Will I Receive Holiday Pay While on Parental Leave?
If you are on an unpaid Parental Leave, you are not eligible for university holiday pay. If you are on a paid Parental Leave, you will receive holiday pay and you will not be required to use health and personal or vacation time on that day.

Coordination with the Family and Medical Leave Act
Cornell provides leave that goes beyond the minimum provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. Accordingly, the 12-week leave entitlement under the FMLA will run concurrently with the use of Parental Leave, whenever applicable.

Will I Accrue Health and Personal Leave While on Parental Leave?
Health and personal (HAP) leave do not accrue while you are on an unpaid leave. If you are on a paid leave (through use of accruals during leave and/or by receipt of the half-pay feature of Parental Leave), HAP leave accruals will stop on the first day of the month following the 20th consecutive calendar day of paid leave (including holidays and weekends).

Holding a Position While on a Parental Leave
The university holds your job for you up to a total of 26 weeks, if needed. Leave time taken for parental, family health, and personal medical leaves, short-term disability, and/or Workers’ Compensation all count toward the 26 weeks of job hold. Return-to-work issues are individually considered, and this period of time may be extended for valid business reasons, including the provision of a reasonable accommodation. Contact a representative from Medical Leaves Administration for further details.