



Guide to Understanding

Sick Leave and Family Sick and Wellness Leave Policy

Harris County provides employees with several forms of Paid Leave. For more information about the different types of time off, please see § 11 of the [Harris County Personnel Policies & Procedures](#). You may also contact your supervisor or the Office of Human Resources & Risk Management.

EMPLOYEE'S IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER :

Your spouse, children, stepchildren, foster children or any other ward legally placed by the State of Texas, parent, stepparent, siblings, stepsiblings, grandparent, grandchild, parents of your spouse, and the spouses of your children.

PAYROLL YEAR:

The period of time that begins with the first day of the pay period that relates to the first paycheck issued in a calendar year and ends with the last day of the pay period that relates to the final paycheck issued in the same calendar year.

Eligible Employees

Harris County provides all [Regular Position Employees](#) with paid Sick Leave for absences due to personal illness, personal injury, or an appointment with a health care provider (defined in §[11.1014](#) of the Harris County Personnel Policies & Procedures).

Sick Leave Accrual

Employees accrue 4 hours of Sick Leave per pay period or a lower pro rated amount based on hours compensated per week. The maximum accrual is 720 hours/90 days.

Family Sick and Wellness Leave

Employees may use up to 120 hours of their accrued Sick Leave per [Payroll Year](#):

- (1) to care for and assist an [Immediate Family Member](#) who is sick,
- (2) for an appointment with a health care provider, including preventative or routine health care, for themselves or an [Immediate Family Member](#), or
- (3) to bond with their child within the first 12 months after birth or placement for adoption or foster care (also referred to as “parental leave”).

Family Sick and Wellness Leave is deducted from the employee's Sick Leave balance.

Availability

Employees cannot use Sick Leave including Family Sick and Wellness Leave until they are eligible for Group Health and Related Benefits, which is the first day of the calendar month following two full months of continuous employment as a [Regular Position Employee](#).



Documentation

To substantiate a request for leave for a non-FMLA qualifying reason, Department Heads may require an employee to provide a physician's statement for *any* period of Sick Leave, including Family Sick and Wellness Leave.

Employees who request 4 or more consecutive work days of

- ◆ Sick Leave for the employee's own illness or
- ◆ Sick and Wellness Leave for the illness of an immediate family member

must provide a physician's statement indicating the onset and duration of the illness before the department will post the fourth day as Sick Leave or Family Sick and Wellness Leave.

Employees who take parental leave to bond with their child may be asked to provide documentation that verifies the birth, adoption, or foster care placement.

For immediate family members not on the employee's insurance, proof of family relationship may be required, e.g. birth certificates, a [Certification Form](#), a marriage certificate, a court order, photos, or a combination thereof. If the Family Sick Leave also qualifies for FMLA, a completed FMLA certification may be sufficient.

Notification Requirements

Notify your supervisor as soon as practicable when the need to use Sick Leave or Family Sick and Wellness Leave arises. If possible, also provide the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. For instance, if you need to take your mother to physical therapy twice a week for four weeks, tell your supervisor and *try* to schedule the appointments at times convenient for the department.

Additional Requirements

You must not work another job during the hours you miss work using either Sick Leave or Family Sick and Wellness Leave.

If your absences using Sick Leave or Family Sick and Wellness Leave are also protected by FMLA, the absences will be simultaneously designated as FMLA.

Immediate Family Member is defined as: your spouse, children, stepchildren, foster children or any other ward legally placed by the State of Texas, parents, stepparents, siblings, stepsiblings, grandparents, grandchild, parents of your spouse, and the spouses of your children.

Payroll Posting Guidelines:

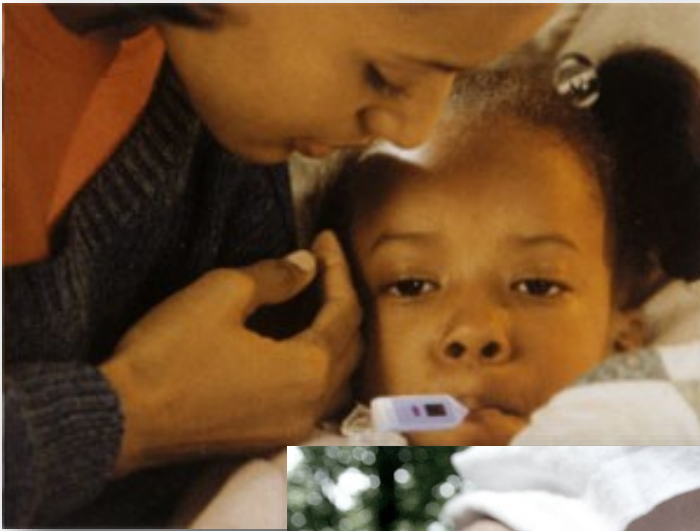
The timesheet code for Sick Leave is "I". The code for Family Sick and Wellness Leave is "B".

Example

Gayle works M-F from 8 AM to 5 PM. She misses 3 hours of work to take her daughter to the dentist. Gayle records 3 hours of "B" and 5 hours of work on her timesheet.

Example

John takes a week off work to care for his mother while she recovers from surgery. If he has the time available, John can record 40 hours of "B" time on his timesheet. If John is eligible for FMLA, his time may also be designated as FMLA.



Uses for Sick Leave and Family Sick and Wellness Leave

When can I use Sick Leave (“I” time)?

You can use your available “I” time if:

- ◆ You are ill or injured and unable to work.
- ◆ You are on FMLA leave for your own serious health condition.
- ◆ You have an appointment for the diagnosis or treatment of a medically-related condition or a wellness, dental, or vision appointment.

When can I use Family Sick and Wellness Leave (“B” time)?

You can use your available “B” time:

- ◆ To seek preventative or routine healthcare for yourself, including dental and vision appointments.
- ◆ To seek preventative or routine healthcare for your immediate family members.
- ◆ To care for your immediate family members who are sick.
- ◆ To bond with your child within 12 months after birth or placement for adoption or foster care (parental leave).

FMLA GUIDELINES

Employees who have worked for the County at least 12 months may have their “I” time or “B” time designated as FMLA if the reason for leave is one or more of the following events:

- ◆ Any incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or childbirth.
- ◆ To care for or bond with your child after birth or placement for adoption or foster care within 12 months of the birth or placement.
- ◆ To care for yourself, your spouse, child, or parent (not in-law) with a “serious health condition” as defined in [§11.1017](#).

- ◆ Military caregiver leave to care for an injured or ill service member or veteran who is your spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a serious injury or illness sustained in the line of active duty. For veterans, this leave is only available for 5 years after discharge.

Refer to [§11.103](#) for more information about FMLA.

Frequently Asked Questions

Example

Bob wants to take Family Sick and Wellness Leave to bond with his newborn daughter.

Bob must :

- (1) request the leave as soon as practicable;
- (2) submit documents that verify his daughter's birth, such as her birth certificate listing Bob as the father;
- (3) get approval from his supervisor before taking leave; and
- (4) use any available Family Sick and Wellness Leave to bond within the first year of his daughter's birth.

Example

Emily wants to take Family Sick and Wellness Leave to take care of her adult son, who lives in Boston, while he recovers from back surgery.

Q: Can she count her travel time to Boston as Family Sick and Wellness Leave?

A: No. Emily may use her available comp or vacation for time she spends traveling to and from Boston if it is during her normal work hours. If she has Family Sick and Wellness Leave available, she can use that when she is caring for her son or taking him to see a health care provider.

What notification is required to use Family Sick and Wellness Leave?

Employees must provide notice of the need for leave as soon as practicable.

What documentation is required to use Family Sick and Wellness Leave?

Department Heads may require medical documentation to support *any* use of Family Sick and Wellness Leave.

Except for parental leave, medical documentation must be provided if you take Family Sick and Wellness Leave for four or more consecutive work days for the same family member.

You may also be required to provide proof of family relationship. Proof of relationship may include: a birth certificate, a [Certification Form](#), a marriage license, a court order, photos, or any combination thereof. If the Family Sick Leave also qualifies for FMLA Leave, a completed FMLA certification can qualify as proof of family relationship.

Employees using Family Sick and Wellness Leave to bond with a newborn, adopted, or foster child, may need to submit documentation that verifies the birth, adoption, or foster care placement.

Does Family Sick and Wellness Leave for parental leave have to be used all at one time?

Not necessarily. Family Sick and Wellness Leave may be used all at once or on a part-time basis. To be approved on a part-time basis, the leave schedule must be consistent with the department's operational needs and be approved in writing prior to the beginning of the leave.

Is there a limit on the amount of Family Sick and Wellness Leave I can take for parental leave?

Yes. Employees can only use up to 120 hours of their Sick Leave balance for all of the Family Sick and Wellness Leave events combined (i.e., including parental leave) in each Payroll Year. For example, if Sue has 200 hours of Sick Leave and uses 24 hours of "B" time for her husband at the beginning of the Payroll year, then 6 hours of "B" time to take her child to the dentist, Sue will still have 90 hours of "B" time remaining for parental leave during that Payroll year. That is the case even though Sue will have more than 90 hours of Sick Leave available.

If you have questions about Sick Leave or Family Sick and Wellness Leave, please call Lina Garcia at 713-274-5404 or email HRRM_email@hctx.net.