



**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**

**April 18, 2023**

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**SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF LEAVE BENEFITS FOR PARENTAL NEEDS**

The purpose of this informal report is to share information regarding the City's leave benefits afforded employees for parental leave and to provide a summary of other leave benefits. The report also provides information in response to the Mayor and City Council's recent inquiry to evaluate expanding the parental leave benefit.

**Leave Benefits**

Beginning on January 1, 2021, the City of Fort Worth became one of the first Texas cities to provide paid parental leave (PPL) to employees. The benefit provides six (6) weeks of paid leave annually to employees following the birth, adoption or placement of a child in connection with foster care, or any other legal placement, to enable the employee to care for and bond with the child.

In addition to PPL, the City provides various leave benefits to employees to include Sick, Vacation, Personal Holidays, Holidays and Compensatory time (as applicable) for all regular General and Civil Service employees. The City also provides Family Illness Leave benefits to Sworn Police and Firefighters. Sick and vacation leave earned may be "banked" with leave balances rolled over year to year, up to the maximum accrual limit. The table below identifies the various leave benefits extended annually in days for each category.

Time in Days	Sick	Vacation	Family Illness Leave	Personal Holidays	Compensatory Time	Accrued Holiday	Paid Parental Leave
General	10	15 to 23	N/A	2	Up to 15	Up to 16	Up to 30
Police	15	15 to 23	Up to 7	2	Up to 30	Up to 16	Up to 30
Fire	15	15 to 23	Up to 7	2	Up to 15	Up to 16	Up to 30

An employee will accrue 10 days of sick leave and 15 days of vacation leave for a total of 25 days of paid leave within the 1<sup>st</sup> year of employment, and every year of employment thereafter. This accrued leave may be used in addition to the 30 days of PPL to provide for paid time off to support an employee's growing family needs.

**Leave Utilization for Growing Family Needs**

The Human Resources Department analyzed the utilization of leave time that employees took in relation to the birth, adoption, or placement of a child including other leave types used in conjunction with PPL. From January 1, 2021 through January 1, 2023, 86,971 hours or 10,871 days of PPL were taken by 381 employees, of which 290 (76.1%) were men and 91 (23.9%) were women. The utilization ratio is comparable to the City's employment make up with the total population of the City employees being 70.5% men and 29.5% women. In addition to PPL, the employees utilized 24,013 hours or 3,001 days of additional leave.

While looking at PPL utilization, HR observed that two-thirds of the male employees used PPL without using other leave options available. Women more frequently used additional paid leave time with most using sick leave and major medical leave<sup>1</sup> to cover their additional time off beyond the 6 weeks of PPL.

<sup>1</sup> Major Medical leave was eliminated in January 1, 2021 and replaced with an improved sick leave benefit. Employees with major medical leave balances may still utilize the leave, however future accruals were eliminated.



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Sick leave accounted for 39.1% of the hours used outside of PPL with vacation making up 18% and major medical making up 22% of the hours used outside of PPL. Personal Holidays, Family Leave (Police and Fire only), Comp Time and Accrued Holiday were also used at much lower levels.

Of the 381 employees who used PPL, less than 2% (9) took unpaid leave for varying lengths of time; all were women and most had been with the City fewer than 7 years. Unpaid leave averaged 107 hours or 13 days for this group of employees.

The table below summarizes the utilization of PPL by employees.

Calendar Years 2021 and 2022					
Number of Employees that:					
	Used PPL	Used Less than Max PPL Benefit	Used Equal to Max PPL Benefit	Used Other Accrued Leave	Used Unpaid Leave
Men	290	125	165	90	0
Women	91	16	75	50	9

**Paid Parental Leave Comparison**

HR reviewed the amount of PPL offered by major Texas cities and found that all implemented PPL in the amounts of 4-6 weeks with the exception of Houston that offers 12 weeks of PPL and Austin that currently offers 8 weeks of PPL for non-Civil Service employees. Austin will offer 12 weeks of PPL beginning in FY2025 for non-Civil Service employees. HR also reviewed the amount of PPL offered by several major private employers in North Texas and found that most either do not offer PPL or offer 6 weeks or less.

**Cost of Paid Parental Leave**

The total cost to the City for providing 6 weeks of PPL is roughly \$2 million annually and includes both soft and hard costs. Departments that must backfill the position of the employee on leave in order to maintain essential services, such as Fire, experience greater costs because the backfill position is typically paid at an overtime rate. The total cost to expand PPL to 12 weeks for all employees is estimated to be \$4 million.

**Short Term Disability and Paid Parental Leave**

Presently the City offers a voluntary Short-Term Disability Plan with 578 employees participating. Slightly more male employees participate as opposed to female employees with an average age of 43 for the male members and 45 for the women. Employees have four options to enroll, each with a different wait period, disability period, and percentage of salary replacement. This plan was introduced January 1, 2022. Presently the City's short-term disability plan covers pregnancy disability due to complications, but not the standard six- to eight-week recovery period. The City is releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for voluntary long and short-term disability plans that will include coverage for the pregnancy recovery period. This benefit change will be announced during Open Enrollment in October 2023, to be effective January 1, 2024.

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**SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF LEAVE BENEFITS FOR PARENTAL NEEDS****Summary and Recommendation**

The leave information analyzed over a 2-year period showed that 98% of the PPL participants received full salary benefits during their associated absence. The City's Paid Parental Leave program is on par with, or better than, most comparison cities and private employers. At this juncture, the data does not indicate that additional PPL is necessary and the City offers sufficient paid time off benefits to support growing families. However, the Human Resources Department is exploring the implementation of Paid Maternity Leave to provide 6 weeks of paid time to recover from giving birth that may be used in addition to PPL for eligible employees. The estimated hard dollar cost of adding this benefit is approximately \$600,000 per year. This will be a budget decision package submitted for consideration for FY 2024.

Dianna Giordano, Human Resources Director, is available to answer any questions.

**David Cooke**  
**City Manager**