



Compassion Leave

1. Purpose

St. Mary's University ("the University") is committed to supporting employees in the unfortunate event that an employee needs time away to care for and support a gravely ill family member. This policy provides the criteria and process for when a job-protected leave could be provided through the Compassionate Care Benefit program under the Employment Insurance Act.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all full-time and part-time employees of the University who require a leave of absence exceeding the (3) days of Urgent Paid Family Leave, have completed at least 90 days of continuous service with the university and qualify for Compassionate Care Benefits under the Employment Insurance Act.

3. Definitions

3.1 Compassionate Care Leave - Unpaid, job-protected leave granted to provide care and support to a gravely ill family member as defined by the Alberta Employment Standards Code.

3.2 Family Member (for the purposes of this policy) - Spouse, adult interdependent partner, common-law partner, children (and their partners), foster children (current and former), wards (current and former), parents, step-parents, guardians and their partners (current and former), foster parents (current and former), siblings, half-siblings, step-siblings (and their partners), grandparents, step-grandparents, grandchildren, step-grandchildren (and their partners), aunts, step-aunts (and their spouses), uncles, step-uncles (and their spouses), nieces, nephews, and any person considered by the employee to be like a close relative. Also includes equivalent relations of the employee's spouse or partner.

4. Principles

4.1 The University values compassion and flexibility by enabling employees to take extended unpaid leave during urgent family situations.

4.2 The University strives to reduce financial hardship and benefit disruptions for employees on leave by maintaining access to employee group health benefits where possible.

5. Related Policies

5.1 Urgent Family Leave Policy

5.2 Bereavement Leave

Approval Authority	Responsible Office	Effective Date	Date Last Revisited	Review Frequency
President's Council	Human Resources	September 2019	February 23, 2026	Every 5 years

Appendix A: Procedures for Eligibility, Duration, Conditions During Leave, Request Process, and Return to Work

Procedures:

1. Eligibility & Duration:
 - 1.1. This policy applies to all full-time and part-time employees of the University who require a leave of absence exceeding the (3) days of Urgent Paid Family Leave, have completed at least 90 days of continuous service with the university and qualify for Compassionate Care Benefits under the Employment Insurance Act.
 - 1.2. This leave allows for up to 28 weeks of an unpaid job-protected absence.
2. Conditions During Leave:
 - 2.1. There will be no accrual of paid time off (Vacation/Personal Days) for leaves exceeding 30 days. However, employees are still eligible to take unpaid vacation equivalent to what they would have earned as an active working employee.
 - 2.2. If an employee is on vacation at the time of leave, the employee shall be granted appropriate leave and be credited the appropriate number of vacation days.
 - 2.3. To avoid interruptions to group benefits while on leave, the University will pay the employer premiums for group benefits on this leave. The employee will be responsible for their portion upon return.
 - 2.4. Leave must be taken on scheduled workdays and cannot be carried forward to a new calendar year or paid out upon termination.
 - 2.5. Additional time off may be requested and requires the use of Banked Time/Time In Lieu, Personal Days, or Vacation before unpaid absence.
3. Request Process:
 - 3.1. Employees will submit a written request to their leader and to Human Resources with a copy of the medical certificate and approval letter from Employment Insurance Program
 - 3.2. Provide at least two (2) weeks' notice before leave begins, unless circumstances require shorter notice.
 - 3.3. Employees must ensure that they record all absences in [DayForce](#).
 - 3.4. The employee's leader is responsible for reviewing absences in DayForce and ensuring compliance with this policy.
4. Returning to Work:
 - 4.1. The employee will provide one (1) week's written notice before returning unless the employee and leader agree otherwise.
 - 4.2. If not returning, the employee must submit written notice two (2) weeks in advance to the leader and to Human Resources.