Frequently Asked Questions about City of Seattle
Paid Parental & Family Care Leave

Why did this policy come about?
The Coalition of Unions originally proposed paid parental leave during negotiations for the current contract based on feedback received on member surveys.

How does paid parental leave work?
The City provides employees with paid parental leave upon the birth, adoption, fostering or guardianship of a child. All eligible employees are given eight weeks of paid parental leave. Up to four additional paid weeks are available based upon the amount of leave the employee has in his/her leave bank.

If you have less than one week of vacation and two weeks of sick leave at the time of the "qualifying event" – i.e. the birth, adoption, foster or guardianship date of your child – you are eligible for 12 weeks of paid parental leave. If you have more than one week of vacation and two weeks of sick leave in your leave bank, you will need to draw down to those amounts prior to the qualifying event or use your leave after the qualifying event in order to access additional paid leave from the City.

How does the City determine how much leave to take from my leave bank?
The City takes a snapshot of your leave on the day of your qualifying event. If you have more than one week of vacation and two weeks of sick leave in your bank, you have the choice to draw down your leave (to one week of vacation and two weeks of sick leave) prior to the qualifying event, or use the leave after the qualifying event. The amount of leave that you are contributing from your banks is subtracted from four weeks, and then the City contributes the remainder of paid leave to get you to four additional weeks, for a total of 12 weeks.

Why do we have to contribute leave from our own vacation and sick leave banks?
The City was unable to budget the full 12 weeks for all employees who are eligible to take paid parental leave. The first 8 weeks of paid parental leave are provided to all eligible employees. The additional four weeks of paid leave provided by the City is determined based on the balances in your sick and vacation leave banks.

How was the draw down to one week of vacation and two weeks of sick leave determined?
The Coalition determined that the average employee has two weeks of vacation and three weeks of sick leave in their leave banks. Because the City could not afford to pay for the full 12 weeks of parental leave at this time, we came to a compromise that members would contribute a portion of their own leave in order to reach 12 weeks without draining the entirety of their sick and vacation leave.

What if I don't have any leave in my vacation or sick leave bank?
Since you meet the minimum leave requirement of 3 weeks or less, you will have access to the 12 weeks of paid parental leave without drawing down.

Can I take leave without pay if I want more time with my new child?
You may be able to do this, however, it depends upon the needs of your department. This is something to discuss with your manager and with Human Resources.

What is family care leave?
Family care leave allows a City employee to take up to four weeks of paid leave to care for a parent, child, spouse or domestic partner – or the parent or child of a spouse or domestic partner – during a serious illness.

What qualifies as a serious illness?
Family care leave uses the same eligibility requirements as the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Also, the serious health condition must be certified by a health care provider.

How does family care leave work?
Similar to paid parental leave, if the eligible employee has more than the three-week minimum requirement (one week vacation, two weeks sick leave), they must first draw down their sick leave to two weeks and vacation leave to one week in order to receive family care leave. The City will add to the balance of your leave to reach up to four weeks of paid family care leave.

How do I request family care leave?
Check with your Human Resources staff to determine if you are eligible for family care leave.