

Augusta University

Policy Library

Shared Sick Leave Program Policy

Policy Owner: University HR Services

POLICY STATEMENT

University System of Georgia (USG) institutions are authorized to establish policies through which employees may voluntarily donate unused sick leave to a pool for possible use by another institutional employee who is experiencing a serious health condition or whose immediate family member is experiencing a serious health condition and who has used all of their accumulated paid leave.

The Shared Sick Leave Program provides a means for USG employees to donate paid sick leave to a shared leave pool and for fellow employees who meet the eligibility provisions set forth in this policy to request leave from the pool.

AFFECTED STAKEHOLDERS

Indicate all entities and persons within the Enterprise that are affected by this policy:

- Alumni Faculty Graduate Students Health Professional Students
 Staff Undergraduate Students Vendors/Contractors Visitors
 Other: This policy applies to all benefits-eligible faculty and staff of Augusta University (“Augusta”).

DEFINITIONS

Employee

Any Augusta employee who accrues annual or sick leave as a benefit of his/her employment, including part-time employees.

Immediate Family Member

As defined in the Family Medical Leave Policy – Employee’s spouse, child or parent.

Leave donor

An employee that makes a voluntary, written request for the irrevocable transfer of sick leave to the Shared Leave pool. Once leave has been transferred to the leave pool, it may not be used by the donor for any other benefit purposes.

Leave recipient

A current employee who has completed the provisional employment period and who has been approved to receive sick leave from the pool. The recipient may use Shared Leave for any qualifying purpose which meets the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) definition of a serious health condition. Shared Leave may be used for the employee or the care of an employee’s immediate family member, which requires an employee’s absence from duty for a period of time longer than the amount of sick and annual leave available to the employee.

Office of Compliance and Enterprise Risk Management Use Only

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Physician

A physician licensed by his or her respective state.

Serious Health Condition

A “serious health condition” under the law is a physical or mental illness or injury that requires either:

1. Inpatient Care
2. Continuing treatment by a healthcare provider

Shared Leave pool

Accumulated sick leave donated by employees for use in accordance with this program.

Temporary Employee

A temporary employee is not eligible to accrue vacation/annual or sick leave, and therefore not eligible for this program.

PROCESS & PROCEDURES

Overview

Augusta has chosen to adopt this program, and it shall be known as the “Shared Sick Leave Program” and the following provisions shall apply:

- Only regular benefits eligible employees who have completed their BOR provisional period shall be eligible to enroll in the Shared Leave Program.
- An employee must enroll in the program during the annual benefits open enrollment period established by the Board of Regents or subsequent enrollment period due to the depletion of the leave pool as defined below.
- A minimum donation of eight (8) sick leave hours (Pro-rated for part time employees) is required to become a leave pool member. A member must have a minimum of forty (40) sick leave hours (pro-rated for part-time employees) remaining after their donation at the time of enrollment.
- Any unused shared sick leave not used by a recipient for a qualifying illness or injury will be forfeited to the shared leave pool.
- Should the Shared Leave pool reserve drop to less than 120 hours, the pool will be considered depleted. In this situation only, all donors will be notified of the depleted pool status and automatically charged eight (8) hours per donor, unless the donor wishes to withdraw from the program. Leave requests will be honored in the order in which they were placed when the pool is replenished. The automatic charge to replenish the pool may occur only once per calendar year. At that time an institution may initiate a special open enrollment period to accept additional program participants. Should the pool be depleted a second time in a given calendar year, no further requests for Shared Leave will be accepted.
- The maximum withdrawal amount during a calendar year is 480 hours (12 weeks) (pro-rated for part-time employees). When a participating employee withdraws the maximum number of hours, his/her membership in the pool will automatically terminate for the remainder of the calendar year. To re-enroll, the employee must meet the initial enrollment requirements.

- Each institution must designate a Shared Leave Program Administrator and may also appoint a committee to review and respond to leave pool requests. If a committee is utilized, prudence and discretion must be exercised to protect and ensure the privacy of personal and confidential health information of those seeking donations.
- Employees receiving compensation from shared sick leave will continue to accrue annual and sick leave during their absence as long as they are paid at least one half of their monthly salary. Accrued annual and sick leave will be applied before Shared Leave.
- A shared leave recipient cannot receive shared sick leave along with other short term or long term income protection benefits (such as SSI, Disability, Workers Compensation, etc.)
- Participation eligibility shall cease upon employment termination (including retirement). Separating employees may not donate any additional unused sick leave hours to the pool at the time of separation.
- No employee shall be denied program participation if he/she meets the established participation criteria. However, funding limitations (e.g., grant funding) may impact eligibility and participation.
- Participating in the program is voluntary.
- Institutions should consider flexibility in this policy in rare and exceptional circumstances involving pandemic emergencies.

Leave Donation

Employees will be given the opportunity to donate a specified number of sick leave hours (in eight (8) hour increments up to a maximum of 80 sick leave hours per enrollment period) from their sick leave accounts to the Shared Leave pool by completing an Enrollment Form. The donated leave will be transferred to the Shared Leave pool at the same time other benefit elections are effective (normally January 1).

Eligibility for Benefit

In order to receive Shared Leave, the employee must:

- be a member of the leave program, and
- have completed the initial provisional period of employment, and
- provide certification of a serious health condition from a licensed physician, and
- have exhausted all sick and annual leave (or provide credible medical evidence that he or she will exhaust all sick and annual leave before the medical condition is resolved).

Requesting Shared Leave

An eligible employee may request shared leave by submitting the Request Form and a completed Physician's Certification Form to the shared sick leave program administrator. If the employee is not capable of making application on his or her own behalf, a personal representative, having documented power of attorney for the employee, may make written application on behalf of the employee.

A potential leave recipient may request up to 160 hours (pro-rated for part-time employees) of Shared Leave at one time, and may make up to two additional requests for Shared Leave within a calendar year, for a maximum total of 480 hours (12 weeks) (pro-rated for part-time employees) per year. The requests may be consecutive.

A recipient of shared leave cannot receive shared sick leave along with other benefits (i.e. SSI, Disability, Workers Compensation etc.)

Approval Process

Donated leave requests will be reviewed by the program administrator and the Shared Leave Program Committee (if applicable). The leave recipient will be notified within ten (10) working days after the completed request is received (or the period designated within institutional policies or procedures, if that date is later) that:

- the request has been approved; and
- the date the employee may begin drawing leave from the pool, and
- if the employee has entered the status of leave without pay, the approved Shared Leave may be substituted retroactively to cover the period of leave without pay.
- Or the request has been denied; and the reason for the denial

Termination of Membership

An employee may withdraw from participation in the sick leave pool at any time by completing the Termination of Membership form and submitting it to Human Resources. If an employee chooses to withdraw from the **Shared Sick Leave Program**, any sick leave time that has been donated before the membership is terminated will be forfeited. Eligibility to participate in this program will also end upon termination of employment.

Appeal

Requests which have been denied may be appealed in writing to the institution's Chief Human Resources Officer. If the Chief Human Resources Officer is serving as the program administrators, an alternative appropriate appeal process must be established.

Shared Leave Program Committee Composition

If an institution elects to establish a leave committee, the committee may consist of one Human Resources staff member, one faculty member, and one staff member from a work unit other than Human Resources (EAC). Additional committee members may be included as deemed appropriate and or necessary for effective program administration.

Confidentiality

The identity of donors to the shared sick leave pool is confidential and will not be shared with anyone. All medical information that is given in order to receive paid sick leave from the shared sick leave pool will also remain confidential. Recipients of shared sick leave and their representatives must not use e-mail to solicit leave by revealing a medical condition, due to the fact that e-mailing of medical information may violate HIPAA privacy guidelines. Shared leave approvers must also refrain from sending emails that reveal medical information about an employee.

REFERENCES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

http://www.gru.edu/hr/benefits/university_benefits/sharedleave.php

RELATED POLICIES

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APPROVED BY:

President, Augusta University and CEO, AU Health System Date: Not Approved Yet