

IDAHO NRCS PARENT- AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Information for Employees and Supervisors



The information in this document is a brief summary of leave and work schedule policies that may assist families. For complete information, refer to the General Manual, Title 360 – Human Resources.

LEAVE

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Act provides federal employees who have 1 year or more of service with up to 12 weeks of leave without pay for family needs or medical conditions. Use of FMLA will ensure that you retain your position or an equivalent position upon your return.

FMLA leave can be used for:

- Childbirth and the care of a newborn
- When a baby has been adopted, or for foster care
- For these purposes above, use of FMLA expires 12 months after the date of birth or placement of the adopted/foster care child
- For the care of a family member with a serious health condition, or the serious health condition of the employee
- Documentation is required to use FMLA, and requires a 30-day notice when foreseeable

FMLA provides leave without pay for family and medical needs, but not paid leave. At the option of the employee, the employee can substitute FMLA leave without pay for:

- Annual leave, or advanced annual leave
- Sick leave (accrued or advanced)
- Leave from the voluntary leave transfer program
- Compensatory time or credit leave



Sick Leave

- Parents may use up to 12 weeks of sick leave each year to care for a child with a serious health condition (FMLA).
- When sick leave is used for adoption purposes, it can be used for appointments, court proceedings, and travel required for the adoption process
- Full-time employees can use up to 13 days of their 12 week FMLA entitlement to care for a child or family member with illness, or accompany them to medical/dental appointments (this is Family Friendly Leave or FFL). Part-time employee FFL is based on their average number of hours worked each week plus the average number of sick leave hours earned during the year.
- Sick leave in excess of 3 consecutive days may require medical documentation



Annual Leave

- Advanced approval required for leave in excess of 3 days and must be requested using OPM Form 71.
- Advanced leave may be granted for leave you will accrue for the remainder of the year (use OPM71)
- Advanced leave may not be carried into the next year
- First-line supervisors have authority to approve or disapprove advanced annual leave



Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

- Donated leave may be sought when an employee runs out of accrued leave
- May request donated leave for medical emergency, or for the medical condition of the employee or a family member.
- Documentation is needed to request donated leave.
- Contact Human Resources to request donated leave.

Maternity Leave

Maternity leave is covered under the FMLA. A birth mother is entitled to use accrued sick leave for medical appointments, hospitalization, and childbirth. A birth father may use up to 12 weeks of accrued sick leave each year to accompany the mother to prenatal appointments, be with her during the period of hospitalization, and care for her during her recuperation period.



- Sick leave is typically used for the period of recuperation, and annual leave used for the period after recuperation. Sick leave may not be used to bond with or care for a healthy newborn – this should be charged to annual leave.
- Use of annual leave can be used to make arrangements for child care.
- LWOP can be used in any amount, as needed, by the mother or father.
- Advanced leave for no more than 30 days may be granted.

- Maternity leave must be requested in writing, with 30 days notice when foreseeable.
- Supervisors will make reasonable effort to accommodate a pregnant staff member who requests modification of duties or temporary assignment.
- Male staff should give 30 days notice, where reasonable, if they plan to take leave to support their pregnant wife, or for newborn care.

Leave Without Pay (LWOP)

- LWOP may be necessary and desirable, for instance, for use with FMLA.
- LWOP is not an employee right – it is based on the discretion of the employer, with certain exceptions.
- LWOP in excess of 30 days requires a Personnel Action.

WORK SCHEDULES

Flexible work schedules enable employees to select and alter their work schedules to better fit their personal needs and help balance work, personal, and family responsibilities. Note that core hours are designated hours (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) during which all full-time employees must be present during their normal tour of duty unless on approved leave or scheduled lunch period (30 to 60 minutes between 11am and 2pm). NRCS offers the following options:

Traditional

Ten 8-hour work days per pay period.

- Work day falls within 6 am and 6pm.
- Credit hours cannot be earned.

Compressed Work Schedules

5/4-9 biweekly

Work schedule completed in less than 10 workdays and includes a 9-hour daily work requirement during 8 days of the biweekly pay period and 8 hours on a 9th day.

- 8-hour day can be any pre-scheduled workday in the pay period and must cover the core hours
- Non-workday is also a pre-scheduled day.
- Credit hours cannot be earned.
- Can be approved by the first-line supervisor.

4-10 hour workweek

10-hour days for 4 days each week, 40-hour weekly work requirement.

- Credit hours cannot be earned.
- Must be approved by the State Conservationist.

Flexitour

Employee can select starting and stopping times within the flexible hours.

- Must work 8 hours a day, 5 days a week.
- Can vary established starting and ending times up to 30 minutes with supervisory approval, and make up the time at the end of the day.
- May expand their lunch period within the established lunch band, (11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.) with supervisory approval, and make up the additional time taken at the end of the day without charge to leave.
- Credit hours can be earned.



Part Time Work and Job-Sharing

Temporary part-time work status can be requested, but will only be granted at the supervisor's discretion, and is dependent on the office workload and strategic planning considerations. When you consider a part-time work schedule, also consider the ramifications to salary, benefits (costs), and impact on retirement, etc. Work with your supervisor to set up a part-time work schedule that meets your needs and the office workload.

NRCS encourages employees who want extra time to care for their families, pursue additional education, accommodate health needs, or phase into retirement to seek flexibility in their work schedules by participating in job sharing. Job sharing is a formal sharing of positions/duties by more than one individual. You cannot job share on supervisory positions. Employees participating in the job-sharing program who wish to return to full-time employment must apply and compete for a vacant full-time position in accordance with the NRCS Merit Promotion Plan, or may be reassigned to a vacant position with the same career potential.

Teleworking

Teleworking reduces energy consumption and allows an employee to work from home or a remote telework site. Teleworking can provide employees with valuable additional time to spend with their family members by reducing commuting time.



- Teleworking is not a right, it's at the discretion of your supervisor.
- Long-term or short-term telework requires a formal written agreement signed by the first and second line supervisors, and requires measurable results. An example agreement can be found in the General Manual: GM 360.429.E.
- For infrequent, occasional telework, permission from the first-line supervisor is sufficient; no formal written agreement is required.
- You are more likely to be granted telework opportunities if you can demonstrate how it benefits the agency (increased productivity, etc.) and by listing out specific products or deliverables that you will accomplish.
- Teleworkers can not care for family members while they are working from their home or alternative work site (not a substitute for dependent care).
- Credit hours may be earned doing telework if you are on the Flexitour work schedule.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Employee Assistance Program within NRCS/USDA is designed to help employees resolve problems that interrupt work performance. These may be problems originating at home. Employees are encouraged to meet with a counselor to discuss problems and receive guidance on a course of action. For more information about the current EAP provider, see:

<http://www.sandcreekeap.com/default.aspx>