

FAMILY LEAVE POLICY for Blackhawk Presbytery

I. Theological Grounding

God created us to be in relationship with one another, to care for one another, and to participate in families. We are required to honor our father and mother, and to care for our children and kin. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) therefore requires that provision be made when a person employed by the church needs to be absent from work in order to care for both self and family.

Section G-2.0804 of the *Book of Order* states that all terms of call “shall include provision for a minimum of twelve weeks paid family medical leave and participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage.”

It is anticipated that individual churches and employers will respond to the need for family leave responsibly and generously. It is equally anticipated that qualifying individuals will use this policy only when needed and will not abuse the generosity of the church.

II. Individuals Covered by this Policy

Section G-2.0804, as implemented in Blackhawk Presbytery, applies to the following teaching elder members of the Presbytery and commissioned ruling elders:

- Teaching elders and commissioned ruling elders installed as pastors, co-pastors, and associate pastors whether for an indefinite period or for a designated term in a congregational setting meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation;
- Teaching elders and commissioned ruling elders serving in temporary pastoral relationships (such as transitional, interim pastors, interim associate pastors, and stated supplies) in a congregational setting meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation; and
- All full-time staff, called or hired, serving a council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a position meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.

III. Guidelines

The 223rd General Assembly (2022) defined family leave as “including but not limited to the following:

- Leave to accommodate the birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child;
- Leave to provide care to an ill or disabled family member;
- Leave to heal following a loss or tragic event.” (2022, PC-Biz HSB 06)

Adopted on May 13, 2025

To that end, the Presbytery of Blackhawk provides:

A. Family Leave

When a qualifying individual needs to take extended leave due to his or her own self-care needs or the needs of a family member, the Session or employing council shall be consulted as soon as possible. Situations that may fall under this heading include, but are not limited to, extended hospitalization or rehabilitation, the need to place a family member in long term care, and the need to take care of family matters in the event of death, including self-care for bereavement or other trauma. Family leave shall be up to twelve weeks in length, during which time the qualifying individual shall receive full effective salary and full pension and medical dues. If additional leave is required, the qualifying individual shall negotiate for such leave with the Session or employing council with the concurrence of the Commission on Ministry. A qualifying individual may lengthen the period of family leave at his or her discretion by using accrued vacation.

B. Parental Leave

When a qualifying individual will become a parent through the birth, fostering or adoption of a child, the Session or employing council shall be consulted as soon as possible. Parental leave should ordinarily begin when the qualifying individual can no longer perform his or her duties or when the child is placed or will soon be placed in the qualifying individual's hands. Parental leave may be up to twelve weeks in length, during which the qualifying individual shall receive full effective salary and full pension and medical dues. A qualifying individual may lengthen the period of parental leave at his or her discretion by using accrued vacation.

C. Additional Considerations

These guidelines should be considered in negotiating appropriate family leave:

1. As standard Board of Pensions benefits include coverage for disability, qualifying individuals who may be experiencing some form of disability shall contact the Board of Pensions and the Commission on Ministry for direction.
2. When it is medically necessary for the individual or a family member, qualifying individuals may take family leave intermittently, taking leave in separate blocks of time for a single qualifying reason, or serve on a reduced leave schedule during the duration of the qualifying reason.
3. Study leave shall not be used in lieu of family leave.
4. "Re-entry" may be scheduled on a full-time or part-time basis as agreed upon by the qualifying individual and session or employing council, with medical approval as needed.
5. If a qualifying individual initiates dissolution within one year following family leave, any unused vacation time shall be credited against the leave.

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6. Should a qualifying individual or a qualifying individual's spouse experience a miscarriage or still birth, he or she shall be given the parental leave he or she would have received had the pregnancy been carried to term with no complications.
7. The time periods listed are intended to be an annual benefit, not to be accrued.

D. Session or Employing Council Responsibilities during the Qualifying Individual's Leave

The Session or employing council is responsible for the ongoing work during the qualifying individual's leave. The Session or employing council should be ready to arrange and pay for pulpit supply, coverage for hospital and emergency visitation and whatever teaching, programming and other responsibilities for which the qualifying individual was responsible. Session moderators are appointed by the Presbytery, with payment from the church.

IV. Cost Considerations

Costs likely to be incurred during these leaves are for filling the pulpit and moderating the session. Costs for pastoral care and administrative work are likely to be small. Suggestions for filling the costs are:

1. An escrow account established at the time of call.
2. An annual "set-aside" amount following initial call until an adequate balance is reached.
3. Monthly "set-aside" amount following initial call until an adequate balance is reached.
4. Non-reimbursed worship leadership from lay leaders within the congregation.