

# Paid Leaves for Prenatal, Parental and Infant Wellness Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*Dated 4.1.2022*

## General

### **1. Why is the City of Houston adding paid prenatal, parental and infant wellness leaves to its employees?**

By offering paid, prenatal, parental, and infant wellness leaves, the City of Houston will be able to attract and retain top talent while supporting families and children. The City is able to offer these new benefits with no budgetary impact to the City as the hours approved under this ordinance are already included in the annual budgeted personnel costs.

### **2. Who was involved with developing the ordinance?**

Under Mayor Turner's direction, Human Resources, Finance, Administration & Regulatory Affairs and the Legal departments have been exploring policies of this nature. They reviewed other municipalities, public sector and private policies, including our local competitor for talent, Harris County. For a partial listing of municipalities with similar programs, [click here](#). Based on their review and the financial analysis, the ordinance was proposed to the current administration for consideration.

### **3. When does the paid prenatal, parental and infant wellness leaves go into effect?**

May 14, 2022 and the leave is not retroactive.

### **4. What is the difference between leaves available under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and leaves available under this ordinance?**

Currently FMLA is unpaid, unless the employee uses their available accrued leaves (e.g., vacation, sick, and personal leave.) Under the new ordinance, new paid leave categories are created which the employee can use to cover their absence away from work due to or related to pregnancy or childbirth, or to bond or care for a child. Employees no longer will need to save vacation, sick or personal leave time to ensure they are paid for absences due to or related to pregnancy or childbirth, or to bond or care for a child.

### **5. Who is eligible for paid leaves for prenatal, parental and infant wellness?**

Any full-time employee (part-time and temporary employees are not eligible) who has been employed by the City of Houston as a full-time employee for at least six (6) continuous months prior to the initial use of the paid leaves for prenatal, parental and/or infant wellness. This policy shall apply equally to any parent regardless of gender and this policy is applicable with respect to couples whether male, female or LGBTQ+.

### **6. Can both parents have paid prenatal, paid parental or infant wellness leave is working for the City of Houston?**

Both parents may be granted paid leaves for prenatal, parental and infant wellness. The maximum number of hours are not shared between both parents.

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**7. If I have exhausted FMLA leave or I am not eligible for FMLA, can I take paid parental leave?**

Yes, provided you meet eligibility.

**8. If am expecting multiple births (twins, triplets, etc.). Do I qualify for more paid prenatal, parental and/or infant wellness?**

An employee will not receive more than the maximum allotted amount of paid prenatal, parental and infant wellness from the first date the leave (prenatal, parental or infant wellness) is used in a 12-month period, regardless of whether more than one birth occurs within that 12-month period.

**9. Can I use my own accrued leave if I run out of paid leave for prenatal, parental and/or infant wellness leave?**

Yes. An employee can use their appropriate accrued leave to cover an absence away from work. The approval to use such leave shall be in compliance with the city's and or department's policy.

**10. Do I need to exhaust my available accrued leaves before using paid prenatal, parental or infant wellness leave?**

No. Paid prenatal, parental, and infant leaves are available paid leaves in addition to accrued leaves.

**11. Am I eligible to use paid parental or infant wellness leave if the infant was born before I was hired with the City of Houston?**

Yes, effective May 14, 2022, if the employee meets eligibility and the leave will expire 12-months from the date of birth of the child.

**12. I am in the process of placement of a child (foster or adoption). When does my eligibility begin?**

Leave will be effective May 14, 2022, if the employee meets eligibility.

**13. If I have questions about paid leaves for prenatal, parental or infant wellness, who should I contact?**

An employee should contact their department's Client Relations Manager (CRM) and FMLA Coordinator.

## **Prenatal Leave**

**14. What is paid prenatal leave?**

Paid prenatal leave is leave available to eligible employees to cover their absences away from work due to prenatal wellness healthcare appointments and/or other absences related to the pregnancy. Paid prenatal leave is in additional to and separate from any other paid leaves.

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## 15. How much paid prenatal leave is available to eligible employees?

The maximum amount of paid prenatal leave is 160 hours.

## 16. What type of documentation will be sufficient to use paid prenatal leave?

An employee requesting to use paid prenatal leave are required to submit a healthcare provider to support the need to use paid prenatal leave.

### Parental Leave

## 17. What is paid parental leave?

Paid parental leave is leave available to eligible employees to cover their absences away from work for the purposes to be able to bond and care for a child after the birth or placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care to be used within the first year after childbirth or placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care.

## 18. How much paid parental leave is available to eligible employees?

Initially the maximum number of paid parental hours will be 320; however, effective September 1, 2023, the maximum number of paid parental hours will increase to 480.

## 19. Does paid parental leave have to be taken all at one time?

Paid parental leave may be taken at one time or at different times intermittently subject to parameters consistent with law, promulgated procedures, and operational needs; however, if paid parental leave is used concurrently with Family and Medical Leave.

## 20. What type of documentation will be sufficient to use paid parental leave?

An employee requesting to use paid parental leave are required to submit their request in the same manner as requesting Family and Medical Leave, regardless of if they are eligible.

### Infant Wellness Leave

## 21. What is paid infant wellness leave?

Paid infant wellness leave is available to eligible full-time employees to cover their absences away from work following the birth of a child or placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care to be used to take an infant to a healthcare provider for examinations and physicals, immunizations, checkups and prospective health screening/testing of any kind during the infant's first year after birth.

## 22. How much paid infant wellness is available?

The maximum amount of paid infant wellness leave is forty (40) hours during the infant's first year after birth.

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## **23. What type of documentation will be sufficient to use infant wellness leave?**

An employee requesting to use infant wellness leave are required to submit a healthcare provider to support the need to use infant wellness leave.