

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

**Revised 11.26.2022**

## **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.

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

May 14, 2022, and the leave is not retroactive. Example: Birth of a child was on February 9, 2022, the eligible employee will have parental leave and infant wellness available effective May 14, 2022 until the day after the child's first birthday.

### **3. 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.

### **4. 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+.

### **5. Can both parents have paid prenatal, paid parental or infant wellness leave if 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.

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

Yes, provided you meet eligibility.

**7. If I 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.

**8. 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.

**9. 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.

**10. 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.

**11. 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.

**12. How do I submit an application for paid prenatal, paid parental and/or infant wellness leave?**

To submit an application for paid prenatal, paid parental and/or infant wellness leave, please visit the PPI Application Portal at [COH PPI Leave Application Portal](#).

**Added 11.26.2022**

**13. How do I submit my request to use leave (time off requests) for paid prenatal, paid parental and/or infant wellness leave?**

Employees who have an approved application to use paid prenatal, paid parental and/or infant wellness leave are required to submit their requests to use leave (time off requests) through PPI Leave Request Portal at [COH PPI Leave Request Portal](#).

**Added 11.26.2022**

**14. Can my supervisor deny the leave request to use paid leaves for prenatal, parental or infant wellness leave?**

Provided the employee's absence would not unduly disrupt the department's operations, supervisors should approve requests to use paid leaves for prenatal, parental or infant wellness leave in compliance with the department's leave policy. **Note: PPI Leaves used concurrently with FMLA shall follow FMLA guidelines.**

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**15. What is the City's work week?**

For the purposes of AP 3-16: Prenatal, Parental and Infant Wellness leave, the work week is defined as Saturday thru Friday.

**Added 11.26.2022**

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

Please email [PPILeaves@houstontx.gov](mailto:PPILeaves@houstontx.gov) if you have additional questions not covered in the FAQs.

**Prenatal Leave**

**17. 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 addition to and separate from any other paid leaves.

**18. How much paid prenatal leave is available to eligible employees?**

The maximum amount of paid prenatal leave is 160 hours.

**19. What type of documentation will be sufficient to use paid prenatal leave?**

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

**20. My due date is May 31, 2022, how much prenatal leave will be available to me if I met eligibility criteria?**

If the employee meets eligibility criteria, they will have up to 160 hours available for use.

**~~21. I do not work the traditional 8-hour shift, instead I am scheduled to work a 9-hour, 10-hour, 12-hour, 14-hour or 24-hour shift. How many hours of prenatal leave will I use?~~**

~~Prenatal leave will be deducted on an hour for hour basis equal to the hours for your regular shift, including mandatory overtime hours. Example: If the employee is scheduled to work a 10-hour shift and is away from work for 4 hours, then employee will use 4 hours eligible prenatal leave. However, if the same employee was away from work for the entire shift, then the employee will use 10 hours of prenatal leave.~~

***This question has been deleted from the FAQs and replaced with #19 below.***

**19. Can I use prenatal leave to cover my entire shift due to a prenatal wellness healthcare appointment?**

Prenatal leave can be used to cover an employee's absence to attend a prenatal wellness healthcare appointment. Example: If an employee's absence for a prenatal wellness appointment, including travel time, is for 3 hours and the employee would like to be off for the entire shift, then the employee will need to use some other available appropriate leave (i.e., vacation, personal or PTO leave) in combination with prenatal leave to cover the employee's entire shift.

**Added 11.26.2022**

**Parental Leave**

**20. 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.

**21. 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.

**22. 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.

**23. My child was born on a Wednesday, October 26, 2022 and I would like to use 6 weeks of paid parental leave. How should I complete the Authorization to use intermittent leave?**

Start date should be 10/26/2022 and end date should be 12/9/2022

**Added 11.26.2022**

#### 24. 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 and documentation in the same manner as requesting Family and Medical Leave, regardless of if they are eligible.

#### 25. I do not work the traditional 8-hour shift, instead I am scheduled to work a 9-hour, 10-hour, 12-hour, 14-hour or 24-hour shift. How many hours of parental leave will I use?

Parental leave will be deducted on an hour for hour basis equal to the hours for your regular shift, including mandatory overtime hours. Example: If the employee is scheduled to work 60 hours in a work week, which includes mandatory overtime and the employee is absent for the entire work week due to a covered reason, then the employee will use 60 hours of parental leave.

#### 26. Can I use parental leave intermittently?

Yes, however, parental leave used intermittently shall be requested in one (1) work week increments, along with a completed [Authorization to Use Parental Leave Intermittently Form](#). **Note: The work week is defined as Saturday through Friday.**

**Added 11.26.2022**

#### 27. If I request to use parental leave intermittently, will I need to obtain authorization from my immediate supervisor?

Yes. The ability to use parental leave intermittently should not unduly disrupt the department's operations. Therefore, employees will need to submit a complete [Authorization to Use Parental Leave Intermittently Form](#) with the leave request through the [PPI Portal](#).

**Added 11.26.2022**

### **Infant Wellness Leave**

#### 28. 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.

#### 29. 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.

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

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

**31. Can I use infant wellness leave to cover my entire shift due to a infant wellness appointment?**

Infant wellness leave can be used to cover an employee's absence to attend an infant wellness appointment. Example: If an employee's absence for an infant wellness appointment, including travel time, is for 2 hours and the employee would like to be off for the entire shift, then the employee will need to use some other available appropriate leave (i.e., vacation, personal or PTO leave) in combination with infant wellness leave to cover the employee's entire shift.

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