

# PARENTAL LEAVE

## Frequently asked questions for supervisors

*These FAQs are based on the policies and procedures of WHO at the time of writing based on WHO eManual III.6.15 Parental Leave policy revision of 1 January 2023. These FAQs are for guidance only. In the case of a conflict between the FAQs and the eManual provisions, the eManual provisions take precedence.*

### 1. **When does a staff member have to formally inform me, as their supervisor, of their plans to take parental leave?**

A birth mother is required to notify the Organization through submitting a parental leave request in GSM to Staff Health and Wellbeing Services (SHW)/Regional Staff Physician (RSP) between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy at the latest. Non-birthing parents are required to provide a full 4 to 5 months' notice prior to the planned leave start date. When approved, you, as the supervisor will receive a GSM worklist notification of the planned absence.

### 2. **What action do I need to take when a staff member notifies me of their planned absence?**

You should :-

- read and familiarise yourself with the WHO eManual section III.6.15 on Parental Leave for your responsibilities;
- review the staff member's appointment to assess whether a contract extension will be required;
- contact your HQ Division Business Partner/Associate, Regional HR Manager or Country Office HR focal point to discuss backfilling arrangements or other planning within the department during the absence;
- review the staff member's performance cycle dates in order to complete a performance review prior to departure or amend objectives, as appropriate;
- discuss with the staff member whether they have already considered if they will require any additional leave following the exhaustion of parental leave. This is purely for planning purposes, no commitment is necessary at this stage;
- refer your staff member to the FAQ's for staff members for the key areas on which they may need further information.

### 3. **How long is parental leave in total?**

Staff members are eligible for parental leave based on the appointment they hold at the time of the birth.

*Non-birthing parents*

- Continuing, fixed-term and temporary appointments of 12 months or more, including temporary appointments of less than one (1) year which are extended resulting in an uninterrupted period of service of one (1) year or longer **prior to the due date or date of legal parenthood** – 16 weeks single birth/18 weeks multiple birth.
- Temporary appointments of less than one year but more than 6 months **prior to the due date or date of legal parenthood**, including those extended up to a period of less than 12 months – 8 weeks single birth/10 weeks multiple birth.
- Temporary appointments of uninterrupted service of 6 months or less **prior to the due date or date of legal parenthood** – 4 weeks single birth/6 weeks multiple birth.

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### *Birth mothers*

- Continuing, fixed-term and temporary appointments of 12 months or more, including temporary appointments of less than one (1) year which are extended resulting in an uninterrupted period of service of one (1) year or longer – 26 weeks single birth/30 weeks multiple birth.
- Temporary appointments of less than one year – 16 weeks single birth/20 weeks multiple birth.

#### **4. Am I obliged to extend a contract for a staff member on parental leave?**

If your staff member has a **fixed-term** appointment and the due date is a maximum of 6 weeks after the initial appointment expiry date you will be required to extend to cover the full duration of the parental leave.

If your staff member has a **temporary appointment** that expires during the period of parental leave and the due date is a maximum of 6 weeks after the initial appointment expiry date, the appointment must be administratively extended to provide for the relevant entitlement. Please discuss with your HQ Division Business Partner/Associate, Regional HR Manager or Country Office HR focal point.

#### **5. Can a staff member absent themselves for medical appointments prior to parental leave?**

Yes. If supported by a medical certificate these absences would be approved by Staff Health and Wellbeing (SHW)/Regional Staff Physician (RSP) as certified sick leave. If there is no supporting medical certificate the absences are entered as uncertified sick leave or other leave depending on the staff member's available balances.

#### **6. What happens if the staff member is absent due to illness for several weeks before the parental leave starts?**

Normal sick leave provisions will apply. Certified sick leave must be entered into GSM along with a supporting medical certificate for approval by SHW/RSP.

#### **7. What action should I take regarding performance evaluation for a staff member departing on parental leave?**

As a supervisor you should ensure that the performance review is undertaken before the staff member departs on parental leave. Adjustments to the performance review cycle dates and objectives may be made as necessary. A delay in completion of the PMDS regular cycle may be agreed upon between yourself and the staff member prior to departure, if considered necessary. If the staff member is on probation the probationary period may be extended to allow for adequate evaluation.

#### **8. How can I plan to cover an absence during parental leave?**

A backfill funding mechanism is in place to allow replacement of staff during parental leave. You should discuss options with your HQ Division Business Partner/Associate, Regional HR Manager or Country Office HR focal point with regards to contractual arrangements and full-time or part-time back-up requirements. In order to establish terms of reference, it is advisable to identify the tasks which have to be done during the staff member's absence HR will be able to advise on the grade of temporary cover required in this case.

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It is also helpful to have a discussion with the staff member at an early stage about whether they have already considered if they will return after the exhaustion of parental leave, or whether they are considering continuing their leave with annual leave or Special leave without pay. Supervisors should be mindful of the sensitive nature of such discussions.

### 9. Is temporary cover for parental leave paid for by the Organization?

A backfill funding mechanism is in place across all 3-levels of the Organization – see SOP on Parental leave backfill funding in the related content of WHO eManual section III.6.15. Please discuss modalities with your HQ Division HR Business Partner, Regional HR Manager or Country HR focal point.

### 10. Should I take any particular action before the staff member actually departs on parental leave?

#### ○ Performance review

You should ensure that the performance review is undertaken before the staff member departs on parental leave. Adjustments to the performance review cycle dates and objectives may be made as necessary in accordance with procedures for performance evaluation. A delay in completion of the PMDS regular cycle may be agreed upon between yourself and the staff member prior to departure, if considered necessary.

#### ○ Leave requests

Ensure that all leave is entered and approved in GSM prior to departure including post-parental leave if the staff member knows what they intend to take. Completed leave must be confirmed before departure. Remind the staff member that they must provide at least 4 weeks of notice for any post-parental leave requests and two months for a request to officially work part-time.

#### ○ GSM - Vacation rules/Outlook - Out of office/Telephone - voicemail

Ensure that the staff member has put in place all the above for the planned period of absence to ensure business continuity.

#### ○ Contact details

It is useful to discuss and agree with the staff member before parental leave commences how you can stay in touch with each other if necessary. You may request a personal email or telephone number to ensure that you are able to communicate any important information to their during their absence e.g. structural changes, major developments, administrative obligations, further leave requests.

### 11. Will I be notified if the staff member changes their mind about how much leave they wish to take e.g. if they decide to take a period of special leave without pay after parental leave?

A staff member must give at least 4 weeks' notice of any post-parental leave options. Managers must give full consideration to post-parental leave requests. A staff member may submit a Special leave without pay request having had a prior discussion with the supervisor. Any concerns should be discussed with your HQ Division Business Partner/Associate, Regional HR Manager or Country Office HR focal point.

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### **12. What happens if I receive a request for a Within Grade Increase (WIGI) while the staff member is on parental leave?**

A staff member remains your supervisee during their parental leave. They are entitled to benefit from a within grade increase if this falls during their parental leave. The decision to approve, defer or withhold a within-grade increase must be taken in accordance with procedures for performance evaluation.

### **13. Can I ask a pregnant staff member to undertake duty travel?**

In order to protect the health of both the staff member and the unborn child, duty travel for pregnant staff members will require clearance by SHW/RSP. If clearance is not approved, the staff member must not suffer any adverse work, performance evaluation or other repercussions due to the inability to travel.

### **14. Can I ask a staff member on parental leave to undertake duty travel?**

A staff member on parental leave has the right to their full parental leave entitlement. Only once the staff member returns to work may they be requested to undertake duty travel. If, however, of their own volition they requests to return to work prior to expiry of their parental leave, the pre-requisite conditions in WHO eManual III.6.15 must be fulfilled.

### **15. Can I ask a staff member on parental leave to work from home?**

No. A staff member on parental leave has the right to their full parental leave entitlement and should not be requested to carry out any work during that time.

### **16. During the staff member's absence there have been several structural changes in the department which may affect the staff member's return to duty. What should I do?**

If you foresee any problems in the staff member returning to their original position or if you foresee sensitive issues please consult your HQ Division Business Partner/Associate, Regional HR Manager or Country Office HR focal point at the earliest opportunity.

### **17. Can I contact the staff member during their parental leave?**

A supervisor may contact a staff member on parental leave to discuss certain issues e.g. if there have been important changes in the department, developments that may impact their directly or to discuss plans for returning to work. The frequency and nature of the contact will depend on the nature of the information to be communicated and any agreement reached between both parties before parental leave commenced.

### **18. I have received a request from a staff member to return to duty on a part-time basis following their parental leave. Do I have to accept the request?**

Firstly, you should contact your HQ Division Business Partner/Associate, Regional HR Manager or Country Office HR focal point if you receive a request to return to work on a part-time basis, or for any other change to the working pattern. Supervisors are expected to facilitate the return to work and therefore give careful consideration to requests to return on a part-time basis while taking exigencies of service into consideration.

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If however, the part-time request is for the purpose of breastfeeding between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> birthdays of the child, then supervisors must approve the request subject to a medical certificate having been received by SHW/RSP.

### 19. When will I be notified of the return to work date?

The projected return to work date after parental leave is indicated in the initial leave request the staff member submits. Once approved by the relevant medical service Regional Staff Physician/Staff Health and Wellbeing Services (RSP/SHW) you will receive a worklist notification in GSM. If the staff member does not amend the date since the initial request, that date remains. If the staff member requests to end the parental leave or take a remaining portion of parental leave at 50%, they must request and discuss with you in advance. If approved, you would receive a GSM worklist notification. If, however, your staff member wishes to take further leave (annual, special leave without pay, etc) after parental leave, they must provide at least 4 weeks' notice of their intention. Supervisors are expected to facilitate and support the return to work of the staff member.

### 20. Upon returning to work, how much time can staff members take off to breastfeed/nurture and for how long?

All staff members eligible for parental leave are entitled to fully paid time off on a daily basis **up to the child's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday** for the purpose of breastfeeding and/or nurturing.

This time off is for a maximum of 2 hours per day (depending on the working hours per day). No time off will be granted where a working day is less than 6 hours per day. Time off is granted per work day and cannot be accumulated to take off a full or half day. As a supervisor you should take note of the anticipated date of full time return to work i.e. the child's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Staff members wishing to continue breastfeeding **between the child's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> birthdays**, should be permitted to work flexible working hours and/or make an official request to work a part-time schedule up to the child's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, subject to receipt of a medical certificate by SHW/RSP.

HRT/HPJ March 2023