

Guidelines for Accommodating Employees' Need to Care for Family  
Faculty and P&S Employees  
Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost  
Updated August 2008

Iowa State University recognizes that faculty and professional and scientific staff face a difficult balancing act in combining family and work commitments. To help its employees meet this challenge, the university provides leave for certain family situations. This leave may be partial or full, paid or unpaid, as specified below.

When P&S employees and faculty inform department chairs/directors of the need to take leave to address certain family situations, the chair/director and the employee can assess the situation and devise a work plan to accommodate the situation. These family situations may include the birth/arrival of a child or the illness of the employee or a family member.

### **Leave Options**

Many employees will be able to draw from current accumulations of sick leave and vacation time to help them address their family situation. The employee should consult with the chair/director and with Human Resources about the appropriate use of such paid leave.

Many employees will also qualify for the use of FMLA. FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) requires covered employers like ISU to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to "eligible" employees for certain family and medical reasons (paid leave runs concurrently with FMLA). Under FMLA, employees are eligible if they have worked for the employer for at least one year, and for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months. Full information on FMLA is available on the Human Resources web page (<http://www.hrs.iastate.edu/Administration/homepage.shtml>).

New employees who have not been at Iowa State long enough to accumulate substantial paid leave or to qualify for FMLA can explore with the department chair/director other options for flexible work assignments.

### **Work Assignments**

Department chairs/directors should help employees develop appropriate accommodation plans by reviewing with the employee the current work schedule, assignments, and responsibilities. Certain changes may allow the department to continue to fulfill its responsibilities while the employee can adjust to a new home schedule. Possible adjustments include the temporary reassignment of certain duties, adjustments in office/department protocol to improve communication both on campus and electronically, flexible work schedules, the hiring of replacement work for a portion of the responsibilities of the employee, the possible sharing of certain duties (teaching, advising, supervision of other personnel), or a temporary reduction to part-time. Some departments

have been able to use these situations to provide employees opportunities for learning new skills and for cross-training on key responsibilities in the department. These accommodations should allow the department and the employee to maintain quality work.

## **Work Plans**

To assure that consideration is given to the employee's career and family needs while allowing the employing unit to manage workload during the employee's absence, each accommodation should be accompanied by a work plan:

Faculty Work Plan (<http://www.provost.iastate.edu/faculty/resources/written-agreement-faculty.doc>)

P&S Work Plan (<http://www.provost.iastate.edu/staff/resources/written-agreement-p-s.pdf>)

Employees should meet as soon as possible with their supervisor to indicate the need for leave, and provide a proposed work plan showing anticipated length of leave, any inclusion of part-time work, proposed use of paid and unpaid leave, provisions for regular contact with the chair/director/supervisor and department, and needs for computing or other facilities or equipment. The plan must provide for regular contact between the employer and supervisor. Tenure track faculty members are entitled to extension of the probationary period as provided in the Faculty Handbook in certain instances. There is also a policy for part-time appointments for tenured and tenure-track faculty. See [http://www.provost.iastate.edu/faculty/handbook/faculty\\_handbook/section3.html](http://www.provost.iastate.edu/faculty/handbook/faculty_handbook/section3.html) (especially 3.3.1.1)

Since the employee and the chair/director will need to work together on the plan, the two might have an initial meeting to discuss details of the plan, followed by the sharing of a draft plan. After the employee and the director/chair each sign, a copy of the plan will be forwarded to the dean and provost.

Employees must have prior permission from their department chair or director for any compensated outside work during the period of the leave.

The plan may be amended by mutual agreement. Subsequent changes in the medical condition of the employee or employee's family may require amendment of the plan to meet FMLA or other requirements.

## **Summary of Responsibilities**

### **What the university does:**

- Adheres to the rights of employees authorized in FMLA.
- Allows for flexibility in sustaining professional commitments.
- Allows temporary changes in work assignments as part of a written, agreed-

upon plan that provides faculty and P&S staff flexibility in sustaining both the family and professional components of their lives.

- Manages accruals and other benefits appropriate to the paid and/or unpaid leave.
- Assists the department in identifying strategies and resources to facilitate the employee's leave (full or partial) and return to the department.

**What the department does:**

- Works with the employee to review and develop a written plan for the relevant time frame, at the same time understanding that situations arise for which it is not able to plan ahead.
- Provides flexibility in the employee's work schedule and responsibilities.
- Coordinates coverage of employee's duties during leave.
- Grants written requests from tenure-eligible faculty for extensions of the probationary period, in accordance with the *Faculty Handbook*.
- Works with the employee to assess appropriateness of performance evaluation timelines and review schedules.
- May support electronic connectivity to assist employee in sustaining involvement in projects from home.
- Maintains consistent communication with employee and considers changes to the leave plan as the employee's circumstances may change.
- Retains liability in the departmental budget for employer paid portions of relevant University benefits and retirement programs.

**What employee does:**

- Consults early with chair, director or supervisor when the need for leave is anticipated.
- Develops a leave proposal with the department chair or director. The proposal should encompass anticipated length of leave, any inclusion of part-time work, proposed use of paid and unpaid leave, provisions for regular contact with the chair/director/supervisor and department, and needs for computing or other facilities or equipment.
- Receives, upon proper written request and when eligible, an extension of the probationary period (tenure-eligible faculty only, see the *Faculty Handbook*.)
- Maintains consistent communication with department and informs the department of circumstances that may alter the original agreed-upon plan.
- Retains liability for income taxes, medical premiums, and employee portions of relevant University benefits and retirement programs.

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