

## LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH, AND NEW PARENTS

While many people use the term “maternity leave,” it is important for reasons of law and policy to distinguish between the leave intended to cover the short-term, physical disability involved with pregnancy, child-birth, recovery from childbirth (“pregnancy leave,” which obviously only applies to pregnant, female employees) and leaves of absence for the birth of a new child (“new parent leave”), which by law must be available to new mothers and fathers alike, and is also available to employees of both sexes who become parents through adoption or foster-care placement. New parent leave is unpaid (after any available paid leave such as vacation is exhausted) and is subject to the provisions of the FMLA. See the section on FMLA for further explanation of benefits under that program. An employee using pregnancy leave, on the other hand, may use any accrued sick leave for the period in which she is physically unable to work because of pregnancy, childbirth, and recovery from childbirth. While the need for and length of pregnancy leave must be verified by the employee’s physician, typically the Township will accept that up to six weeks can be used for a normal pregnancy, childbirth, and recovery from childbirth without complications. More paid sick leave can be authorized if there are unusual risks in the pregnancy or complications in delivery or with the newborn’s health, and the employee must provide medical verification to support the need for additional pregnancy leave. But any pregnancy leave remains distinct from new parent leave, which is covered by the FMLA policy and is for purposes of bonding with a child rather than any temporary physical disability.

The employee requesting pregnancy-related leave must provide the Township with a written notice of the expected due date and the requested start date of leave and the expected date of return. The employee must confirm with the Township her expected date of return to work within 30 days from the date of delivery. If the employee’s position requires exposure to potentially hazardous conditions, the employee must provide written approval from her physician stating the type of work that can be performed during the pregnancy.

Any request for new parent leave, for female or male employees, must be made under the Township’s FMLA policy. The FMLA’s overall limit of 12 weeks of leave within a 12-month calendar year applies to both pregnancy-related and new parent leave, and any additional leave beyond that 12-week annual limit lies in the sole discretion of the Board of Trustees.

Employees may purchase additional short-term disability insurance policies at their own expense. Additional information on these plans can be obtained from the Administrator’s office.