

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 27, 2010  
TO: All Staff  
FROM: Peter Barnes, VP, Human Resources  
RE: Changes to Emory University's Sick Leave Policy

Over the last 18 months Human Resources has reviewed and updated Emory University's Sick and Vacation Leave practices based on the recommendations of the 2005 Benefits Review Committee. As you may recall, in 2009 we eliminated the "Principal" designation and revised the vacation leave accrual for all staff (resulting in an increased benefit for 900 staff members).

A remaining recommendation of the Benefits Review Committee addresses the current sick leave policy accrual rate. This policy states that all regular staff who work at least 20 or more hours per workweek are eligible to accrue sick leave days based upon years of service (12 days for less than 10 years; 18 days for 10 years but less than 20; and, 24 days for 20-plus years).

The policy was reviewed by the Benefits Review Committee and it was determined that Emory University is an outlier with our sick leave accrual program. Currently, we increase sick leave accrual with extra years of service, while none of our peer universities or Atlanta-area businesses utilize this practice. This results in a higher cost program for Emory, and it was recommended by the Benefits Review Committee that we revise the sick leave policy to be more aligned with the practices of other institutions.

Effective, January 1, 2011, Emory University's sick leave policy will state that all regular staff who work at least 20 hours or more per workweek will be eligible to **accrue up to eight hours of sick leave per month (resulting in 12 days of sick leave per year) regardless of years of service**. Monthly staff who work less than 40 hours per week will continue to accrue on a prorated basis according to their scheduled hours. Accruals for bi-weekly staff will continue to be prorated based on the hours worked within a pay period.

The sick leave policy will also be made more flexible, and will now allow the use of sick leave to take an immediate family member to routine medical and dental appointments. This change is effective immediately.

***It is important to note that the policy change will not impact a staff's current sick leave balance, no current sick leave balances will be reduced, and there will be no cap on the number of sick days a staff member can accrue.***

Based on your current sick leave balance you may determine that, due to these changes, you want to enroll in short term disability (STD) or decrease your STD elimination period to provide coverage in case you are sick or

injured and can't work for a short time. You will have the opportunity to do so in October during the Benefits Annual Enrollment period without an evidence of insurability (EOI).

Please take a minute to review your current sick leave balance prior to October of this year.

Review your sick leave balance:

- Monthly staff can review current leave balances, sick and vacation, through the Exempt Leave Tracking tool available through Employee Self Service.
- Bi-weekly staff can review current leave balances, sick and vacations, through KRONOS on the Finance web site.

While we understand that this change is difficult and it may be seen as a take away by many of our long term staff members it is part of the recommendations that were made to help us ensure that Emory University has consistent, equitable, and competitive practices across our HR programs.

Please contact any of us in central HR Administration if you have questions or need additional information about these changes:

Del King, Associate VP, HR  
Theresa Milazzo, Associate VP, HR  
Jeanne Thigpen, Director, OD/Employee Relations  
Kathryn Wynes, Director, OD/Employee Relations

Attachment – Frequently Asked Questions

## Frequently Asked Questions - Sick Leave Policy change

### **Is the decision to change the sick leave policy driven by the current economic climate?**

No. This decision is based on a recommendation by the Benefit Review Committee that was convened in 2005. This committee looked at various benefit elements and recommended changes that put Emory's programs more in line with the practices of other institutions. Emory's sick leave program was the only one that increased sick leave with years of service. All other institutions granted 12 days of sick leave (or fewer) to employees regardless of service. Therefore, the committee recommended that Emory's program be changed to remove the additional days for longer years of service.

### **How can sick leave be used for the employee and for family members?**

An employee may use accrued sick leave:

- when unable to perform job duties as a result of personal illness (includes accident or injury, pregnancy and childbirth, or other medical conditions);
- when the employee's appointment with a health care provider cannot reasonably be scheduled during non-work hours;
- to care for an immediate family member who is disabled as a result of illness, accident or injury, pregnancy and childbirth, or other medical conditions *requiring the presence* of the employee. Additionally, an employee may use sick leave to accompany an immediate family member to a routine medical or dental appointment. For the purpose of this policy, immediate family shall be the employee's spouse; same-sex domestic partner; children, parents, and legal wards, regardless of domicile; and any other relative residing in the employee's home.

### **Will the changes impact how sick leave is accrued?**

No.

Bi-weekly employees will continue to accrue sick leave on a per-pay-period **basis** based on actual hours worked and paid status (refer to the Chart for Bi-weekly Employees in the [Bi-weekly Sick Leave Policy](#)). Accrual rates will be based on no more than 80 hours per pay period.

For example, if a regular full-time bi-weekly employee worked 80 hours in a pay period, the accrual would be calculated as such:  $40 \text{ hours} \times 0.046154 = 1.846160 \text{ per week}$

Therefore, the total accrual would be 3.69232 per pay period.

Monthly employees who work less than 40 hours per week, will continue to accrue on a prorated basis according to their scheduled hours (refer to the Chart for Monthly Employees in the [Monthly Sick Leave Policy](#)).

**Will employees lose any of their accrued sick leave?**

No. The change to the sick leave policy will not impact an employee's current sick leave balance or cause it to be reduced.

**Does this change place a cap on the number of sick days an employee can accrue?**

No. As in the past, there will be no cap on the number of sick days an employee can accrue.

**What is the impact of this change in the event of short term disability?**

Employees who do not have many days of sick leave accrued and who were previously earning 24 days of sick leave per year may want to consider decreasing their short term disability elimination period. There will be an opportunity to do this during the annual enrollment period in October of this year.

**Do we have employees who use more than 12 days of sick leave per year?**

Yes – typically, these are for extended illnesses that fall under FMLA or non-FMLA Medical Leave.

**What is the impact on FMLA?**

There will be no impact on FMLA. Employees will continue to be able to use any accrued sick or vacation leave to be paid while on FMLA.

**What are the benefits that have been improved since the 2005 recommendations?**

- A new holiday, New Year's Eve, has been added.
- A new pharmacy tier, Tier Zero, has been added, for generic prescriptions for medications associated with certain chronic diseases.
- Vacation leave has been restructured to provide more vacation leave for mid-career hires.
- The Pharmacy Benefit Manager was changed from Caremark to Medco to provide more transparency in pricing.
- Emory has retained the pharmacy benefit for retirees.
- A Health Savings Account option has been implemented.
- The Chair of the Fringe Benefit Committee has been appointed to the Health Plan Steering Committee.
- A web-based health assessment tool has been implemented through Aetna.
- A change has been made in the short term disability policy so that the employee is not required to use all sick and vacation leave before being eligible for short term disability benefits (now the employee is only required to use sick leave up to the total number of days in the elimination period).
- A change has been made in the FMLA policy to allow employees to choose whether to exhaust all their vacation leave before going unpaid (previously, it was required to exhaust all sick and vacation leave).

**Where does the leave donation program stand?**

At this time the university does not have a leave donation program. Currently the costs associated with leave are funded by departmental budgets and to offer a leave donation program the university would have to create a centralized leave donation pool. This would require the university to budget extra funding, which at this point in time is not feasible because of the economic stresses Emory is experiencing. However, we recognize that this would be a valuable program for faculty and staff who have a medical hardship and will revisit the idea again.

**Have we looked at PTO plans?**

We have considered PTO plans, but at this point, we do not recommend implementing this as an option.