

# **SHARED LEAVE PROGRAM**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of shared leave is to provide economic relief for employees who are unable to work continuously or intermittently, and are likely to suffer financial hardship, due to a prolonged catastrophic illness or injury of themselves or an immediate family member.

## **POLICY**

An employee who, due to a prolonged catastrophic illness or injury of themselves or an immediate family member, faces prolonged or frequent absences from work, and has exhausted all available leave may apply for shared leave. Shared leave is obtainable through a pool or direct donation.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Benefit eligible employees who have exhausted all accumulated leave (sick leave, annual vacation leave, bonus leave, compensatory time) may be eligible to receive shared leave. Only employees in leave earning status can participate in the shared leave program.

## **APPLICATION TO RECEIVE SHARED LEAVE**

An employee may submit an application for shared leave. If the employee is unable to complete an application, one may be submitted by a third party acting on their behalf.

The application must include completed FMLA paperwork along with a doctor's statement detailing the diagnosis and estimated duration of the employee's inability to work.

## **DONATIONS AND RECEIPT OF LEAVE**

The maximum benefit an eligible employee may receive of shared leave is 720 hours per occurrence which runs simultaneously with the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). All employee benefits will be paid and uninterrupted during this period. Other compensable benefits will be available to an employee receiving shared leave. Compensable benefits include, but are not limited to holiday pay, workers compensation, accrued leave, and health insurance.

If donating more than four (4) hours, either directly to an employee or to the shared leave pool, the employee must have a combined balance of 240 sick and annual leave hours after the donation. In addition, direct donations must be used prior to leave from the pool.

### **A) Leave Pool**

To donate and receive leave, an employee must be a member of the shared leave pool. The donation of leave to the pool is irrevocable. Employees who have completed one (1) consecutive year of employment prior to July 1 may become a member of the pool. In order to donate or receive leave, the following criteria must be met:

1) Membership requires a minimum donation of four (4) hours of accumulated sick or vacation leave each year during the annual open enrollment period.

2) The maximum donation allowed per fiscal year is 96 hours of sick or annual leave, or a combination thereof.

B) Direct Donations

Pool membership is not required to receive or make direct donations. Direct donations must be used prior to leave from the pool. Requirements for direct donations are as follows:

1) An individual employee may directly donate a maximum of 40 hours of leave to another employee per calendar year.

2) Recipients of direct donations cannot bank the shared leave hours. Any unused leave will be returned on a prorated basis upon the employee's return to work.

3) Direct donations must be made to a designated employee who is approved to receive donated leave.

4) All donations must be in writing and signed by the donating employee.

5) The donating employee may not receive compensation in any form for the donation of leave.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS**

If the Shared Leave Pool is low or without hours, or a non-member of the pool is in need of direct donations, an announcement will be emailed to employees and posted in all Alexander County buildings. The type of need and identity of the employee will remain confidential.

The Human Resources Director is responsible for reviewing each request for shared leave and make an objective determination to approve or deny. If an employee feels the decision is unfair or biased, the employee can appeal the decision to the County Manager, whose decision is final.

A return-to-work note from the employee's attending physician is required for review and approval/disapproval by the Human Resources Director prior to an employee's return to the workforce.

Approved: March 2026

Effective: July 1, 2026