

Paid Parental Leave and Increased Sick Leave May Be Coming to Allegheny County

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On May 13, 2026, the Allegheny County Health Department unanimously voted to move forward a plan for proposed paid parental leave and extended sick leave. A public hearing was held on June 2, 2026 and a public comment period will be had before the proposal is forwarded to the Allegheny County Council for consideration. This amendment expands the County's paid sick leave ordinance and adopts paid parental leave for eligible employees working in Allegheny County.

According to the Allegheny County Health Department, studies show the weeks following birth are crucial for families to heal, bond, attend medical appointments and protect their child's health. The Health Department estimates that 42 percent of women who give birth in Allegheny County are able to access some form of paid leave.

Under this proposal, paid parental leave would be required to be provided by Allegheny County employers for eligible employees. An employee is eligible for leave after working for the employer for a period of 30 days and applies to both full-time and part-time employees. This proposed leave shall extend for a period of not less than eighteen (18) weeks and is in addition to other paid time off provided by the employer (and does not include paid sick leave required by Allegheny County). Parental leave is to be compensated at the employee's same base rate of pay. For part-time employees, employers would be required to apply the base rate of pay to an average of the employee's weekly hours (although this is not specifically set forth in the proposed amendment).

The proposed amendment is drafted poorly and contains inconsistencies. For example, the amendment allows parental leave to be used within twelve (12) months after the birth or adoption of a child. However, parental leave is also defined to include leave taken in the first eighteen (18) months after the birth or adoption of the child. This inconsistency will need to be addressed prior to its adoption.

Parental leave can be taken consecutively (although it is referred to as sequential leave) or intermittently. Mirroring the Family and Medical Leave Act, employers are required to maintain health insurance benefits for the employee while taking parental leave and are prohibited from retaliating or taking any adverse action against an employee utilizing this benefit.

There are several other administrative burdens placed on employers including but not limited to, notification of benefits, processing requests for leave and making payments to employees utilizing parental leave. An employee who takes parental leave must be restored to their previous position held or to an equal position.

The proposed amendment also substantially expands the current paid sick time requirements. Paid sick leave is proposed to apply to all Allegheny County employers regardless of size. Employers with fifteen or more employees must provide one hour of paid sick for every 30 hours an employee works within the geographical boundaries of Allegheny County. The cap

on paid sick leave is increased from the current maximum of 40 hours (for full-time employees) to 72 hours of paid sick time in a calendar year. Employers with less than fifteen employees would also be required to provide one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours an employee works within Allegheny County. However, for employers with less than 15 employees, paid sick leave is capped at 48 hours paid sick time.