



Policy

POL.COR.18.02 Bereavement Leave Policy

Policy Type: Corporate Policy (Approved by Council)
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Department: Administration
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Policy Statement

The Town of The Blue Mountains acknowledges the personal and varying nature of bereavement and grief and is committed to compassionately supporting employees' individualized needs while respecting their dignity, privacy, and confidentiality. The Town understands that employees may need time off to attend burial services, grieve, and address family matters following the loss of a loved one, and aims to provide sufficient leave to fulfill these obligations.

Purpose

Bereavement Leave is intended to provide time off for employees to manage personal grief and attend to necessary arrangements (such as wakes, funerals, burials, and cremations) following the end of life of a loved one. The policy outlines the maximum bereavement leave available, establishes the related compensation, and grants authority to department heads or their designate to approve bereavement leave requests.

Application

This policy applies to non-unionized employees. For unionized positions, refer to the applicable collective agreement.

Definitions

Permanent Full-Time Employee – an Employee who is hired to work on a full-time basis (35 hours or more per week) with no predetermined end date.

Permanent Part-Time Employee – an Employee who is hired to work on a part-time basis (less than 35 hours per week) with no pre-determined end date.

Seasonal Employee – an Employee hired for a specific season, i.e., Seasonal Roads & Drainage Operators in winter or Seasonal Parks Labourers in summer.

Temporary Full-Time Employee – an Employee who is hired to work on a full-time basis (35 hours or more per week) whose employment is terminated upon a predetermined end date or project completion.

Temporary Part-Time Employee – an Employee who is hired to work on a part-time basis (less than 35 hours per week) whose employment is terminated upon a predetermined end date or project completion.

Procedures

1. Eligibility

- All permanent full-time and part-time employees are eligible for paid bereavement leave effective immediately upon employment.
- Temporary, seasonal, and casual employees are entitled to the equivalent unpaid bereavement leave from their first day of employment.

2. Entitlements

The entitlement to paid leave for bereavement shall be as follows:

a) When the death involves an immediate family member such as a spouse (includes both married and unmarried couples, of the same or opposite genders), child (including step-child, adopted child, or legal ward), parent (including step-parent and a person in a permanent relationship treating the child as their own), sibling, or step-sibling, a miscarriage or stillbirth (employee or their partner), a failed fertility, adoption, or surrogacy (employee or their partner), employees will receive up to five (5) days of paid leave per calendar year without any loss of service. The term "parent" also includes individuals with whom a child is placed for adoption and those in a stable relationship with a parent intending to treat the child as their own.

b) For the death of other immediate family members not listed above, including mother-in-law, father-in-law, step-mother-in-law, step-father-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, grandparent, grandparent-in-law, grandchild, legal guardian, niece, nephew, sibling, aunt, and uncle, sibling, or cousin, employees are eligible for up to three (3) days of paid leave per calendar year without service loss.

c) For the death of a family member not covered in categories a) or b), employees will receive one (1) day of paid leave per calendar year without any service loss.

d) If the employee is required to serve as a pallbearer at a funeral outside the family relationships specified in a), b), or c), they are entitled to one (1) day of paid leave without any service loss.

e) Special circumstances may be considered for additional leave, subject to the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Director, in consultation with the Manager of Human Resources.

Requests for bereavement leave where an employee does not qualify for leave under this policy will be handled on a case-by-case basis, such as in the event of the death of an extended family member or close friend. Additional unpaid time off may be given at the Town's discretion upon request.

3. Requesting Leave

It is the employee's responsibility to notify their supervisor/manager/director of their need to take bereavement leave as soon as possible or, at the latest, on the first day of absence. The notification should include the expected duration of the bereavement leave, understanding that the duration of leave may increase after this initial leave request.

Bereavement leave may be used for the following reasons:

- Arrangement of a funeral or memorial service
- Attendance at a funeral or memorial service
- Resolving matters of settling an estate
- Fulfillment of family obligations
- Personal mourning

Bereavement leave does not need to be taken consecutively and may be taken intermittently as needed for belated memorial services or to celebrate a date of importance.

4. Culture, Creed, Religious and Spiritual Considerations

The Town recognizes that different cultures respond to death in significantly different ways. Requirements may not be known and will not be assumed. It is the employee's responsibility to make their needs known to their manager at their earliest opportunity.

5. Returning to Work

In certain circumstances, a full return to work may be difficult for an employee following a bereavement leave. For example, when the employee's grief is likely to impact their ability to

perform their role, or where a new dependent arrangement must be sourced or responsibility for the care of a dependent has transferred to the employee.

An employee with concerns about returning to work after bereavement leave should discuss this in confidence with either their supervisor/manager/director or the Manager of Human Resources. In such instances, the Town may allow a gradual return to work where consideration will be given to the number of hours worked and/or alternative duties.

Any such arrangement would need to be agreed to in advance with the supervisor/manager/director and made in consultation with the Manager of Human Resources. In some circumstances, employees may be eligible for Short Term Disability.

6. Counselling and Support

The Town recognizes that grieving and adjusting to loss is a personal process that may take significant time. The Town encourages employees experiencing bereavement to utilize available support resources, including confidential counselling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP offers 24/7 access to emotional support, grief counselling, and stress management guidance, with complete privacy and confidentiality. Employees can obtain EAP contact information through the Town's intranet portal or directly from Human Resources. Further mental health resources and well-being information are also accessible through Human Resources.

7. Scheduled Vacation Time

If, while on scheduled vacation, an employee has a death occur, they may, upon request, have bereavement leave substituted for vacation leave.

8. Compliance

The Town may require an employee to provide evidence that is "reasonable in the circumstances" to confirm their eligibility for bereavement leave. This may take the form of a:

- death certificate
- notification from a funeral home
- published obituary
- a copy of a printed program from a memorial service or
- a communication from a legal office setting up an appointment to discuss estate matters.

What will be reasonable in the circumstances will depend on all the facts of the situation, such as the duration of the leave, whether there is a pattern of absences, and whether any evidence is available.

Violations or abuse of this Policy will result in appropriate disciplinary measures, up to and including dismissal.

9. Confidentiality

The Town respects each employee's privacy during such times and ensures that all interactions and arrangements made under this policy are handled confidentially.

References and Related Policies

- [Bereavement Leave- Employment Standards Act, 2000](#)
- [Child Death Leave – Employment Standards Act, 2000](#)
- POL.COR.13.24 Progressive Discipline Policy
- POL.COR.17.05 Vacation Policy

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Employees found to be misusing this policy may face disciplinary action consistent with the Town's progressive discipline policy.

Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed once per term of Council or as required due to legislative change.