Frequently Asked Questions – Paid Parental Leave (PPL)

1. What is Paid Parental Leave?

Paid Parental Leave ("PPL") is a benefit that allows eligible state employees to take an absence from work with pay for up to six (6) workweeks for the birth of a child or the adoption of a child.

2. What types of absences qualify for PPL?

PPL can be used for:
- The birth of the employee's child, or
- The placement of a child with the employee for adoption.

3. Who can take PPL?

PPL is only available to employees who have been employed full-time with the State for at least twelve (12) consecutive months.

4. How much time can I take for PPL absences? What if I need more leave?

Employees may take up to six (6) workweeks of PPL within a twelve (12) month period. If an employee chooses to take additional time off under other leave entitlements beyond the six (6) workweek entitlement (i.e., Policy 827-Family, Medical and Servicemember Leave (FML), and Policy 825-Leave Policies, Section VI. Parental Leave), this time will not be counted as PPL, and the employee will have to use their accrued leave or leave without pay for the additional time off.

5. When is the effective date for PPL? What happens if I am already out due to a PPL-qualifying condition as of the effective date?

Employees can take PPL for qualifying absences beginning on July 1, 2023.

If an employee had a qualifying event prior to July 1, 2023, and has not used all of the FML to which the employee was entitled as a result of the birth or adoption, then the employee is entitled to PPL beginning on July 1, 2023 for the remainder of the FML.

Example 1: An employee had a qualifying event on November 1, 2022 and used eight (8) weeks of FML. This employee would be entitled to use four (4) weeks of PPL starting July 1, 2023 through October 31, 2023.

Example 2: An employee had a qualifying event on October 18, 2022 and had been employed full-time for twelve (12) consecutive months. However, they had not worked enough hours to be eligible for FML. Since they were not eligible for FML, they would not be entitled to PPL.

6. Are both parents eligible to take the leave, or just one?

Both parents can take PPL, if otherwise eligible.

7. What type of notice must the employee provide if he or she plans to take PPL?

In order to take PPL, an employee must provide their supervisor with at least thirty (30) days' notice in advance of the first day of leave. If the employee learns of the birth or adoption less than thirty (30) days in advance, they shall give notice as soon as reasonably possible.

8. Does my PPL expire?

All PPL must be used within 12 months of the qualifying birth or adoption. If an employee does not use their full allotment of PPL before the end of the 12-month period, the leave expires, and the employee cannot take any additional PPL.

9. What if I have more than one qualifying event during a year?

An eligible employee may receive no more than six (6) workweeks of PPL during a twelve-month period, even if there is more than one (1) qualifying birth or adoption during the year.

10. How much am I paid during a PPL absence?

PPL is paid at one hundred percent (100%) of the employee's salary.

11. Will leave designated as PPL count against an employee's accrued leave balances?

No, PPL is not charged to an employee's accrued leave balance.

12. Does an employee accrue leave while on PPL?

Yes, as long as the employee is in a positive pay status for the major portion of the month during which they took the PPL, they will accrue leave for that month.

For example, in August 2023, Employee A is on PPL for the entire month. Because PPL is paid, Employee A is considered to be in a positive pay status for the major portion of the month and will accrue leave. However, in August 2023, Employee B takes PPL for five workdays (5) days. The rest of that month, the employee is out for a non-parental leave reason and takes leave without pay. Because Employee B was on a leave without pay status for the major portion of the month, Employee B will not accrue leave.

13. How does PPL coordinate with Sick Leave Bank (SLB) benefits?

Sick Leave Bank (SLB) benefits are only available for SLB members who have exhausted all accumulated leave and need to take leave for a qualifying condition. Employees will not be eligible for SLB benefits while on PPL, as SLB benefits are not available to members who are receiving income from other sources, including PPL.

14. How does PPL coordinate with Parental Leave under Policy 825-Leave Policies?

Under Policy 825-Leave Policies, Parental Leave, employees who have been employed by the same employer for at least twelve (12) consecutive months as full-time employees may be absent from such employment for up to four (4) months for adoption, pregnancy, childbirth and nursing an infant.

If the leave also qualifies for PPL, the first six (6) workweeks of parental leave will be paid. For the remainder of the leave, the employee must use their accrued leave before going on leave without pay.

Example 1: An employee gives birth to a child on July 1, 2023, and has previously notified her employer that she plans to take the full four (4) months of parental leave. The employee has worked for the employer for over twelve (12) consecutive months. The first six (6) workweeks of the employee's leave is paid without being charged to her leave balance. The remainder of the four (4) month period will be charged to her leave balance or will be designated as leave without pay if the employee does not have any accrued leave. [Note: If the employee also meets the criteria for FML leave during this period, her FML entitlement will run concurrently with her parental leave.]

Example 2: An employee is absent from work due to her pregnancy beginning on July 1, 2023, and has previously notified her employer that she plans to take the full four (4) months of parental leave beginning on this date. She has worked for the employer for over twelve (12) consecutive months. Her child is born on August 1, 2023. Because the first month of her absence qualifies for parental leave (which covers absences due to pregnancy), but not PPL (which does not cover absences due to pregnancy), she will use her accumulated

leave or leave without pay during this period. Beginning on August 1, 2023, six (6) workweeks of the employee's leave are paid without being charged to her leave balance. The remainder of the parental leave period will be charged to her leave balance or will be designated as leave without pay if the employee does not have any accrued leave. [NOTE: If the employee also meets the criteria for FML leave during this period, her FML entitlement will run concurrently with her parental leave.]

15. How does PPL coordinate with the Family, Medical and Servicemember Leave (FML)?

In order to qualify for FML leave, an employee must have worked for the State of Tennessee for at least twelve (12) months; and have worked at least one thousand, two-hundred and fifty (1,250) hours during the year preceding the start of the leave. FML leave can be taken for:

- the birth of a child and to bond with the newborn child within one year of birth, and
- the placement with the employee of a child for adoption and to bond with the newly-placed child within one year of placement.

If an employee qualifies for both FML leave and PPL, the leave entitlements will run concurrently. The first six (6) workweeks of FML leave will be paid without being charged to the employee's leave balance. The employee will be required to use their accrued leave for the remainder of the absence or go on leave without pay if they do not have any accrued leave.

Example 1: An employee adopts a child on July 1, 2023 and has provided adequate notice to his employer regarding his absence. As of July 1, 2023, the employee has worked for the employer for 12 consecutive months and has worked over 1,250 hours in the preceding 12-month period. The employee plans to take 12 weeks of leave. He is eligible to take both FML leave and PPL. The first six (6) workweeks will be paid, and the last six (6) workweeks will be charged to his leave balance. [NOTE: The employee may also elect to take an additional four weeks of leave to complete the four (4) months of leave granted under Policy 825-Leave Policies, Parental Leave]

Example 2: An employee adopts a child on July 1, 2023 and has provided adequate notice to his employer regarding his absence. As of July 1, 2023, the employee has worked for the employer for 12 consecutive months but has worked less than 1,250 hours in the preceding 12-month period. The employee plans to take 12 weeks of leave. He is eligible to take Parental Leave but is not eligible for FML leave. The first six (6) workweeks will be paid, but the last six (6) workweeks he wishes to take – if approved - will be charged to his leave

balance. [NOTE: Even though the employee is not eligible for FML leave, the employee may elect to take additional leave under Policy 825-Leave Policies, Section VI. Parental Leave.]

16. Are there situations where I can qualify for FML leave, PPL, and Parental Leave?

Yes, if the employee meets the eligibility requirements under all three laws. In this case, the leave will run concurrently to the extent permitted by law.

For Example, an employee gives birth to a child on July 1, 2023 and has provided adequate notice to her employer regarding the absence. As of July 1, 2023, the employee has worked for the employer for 12 consecutive months and worked over 1,250 hours in the preceding 12-month period. The employee plans to take four (4) months (or 16 weeks) of leave. She is eligible to take both FML leave, PPL, and Parental Leave. The first six (6) workweeks will be paid, and the remaining ten (10) weeks will be charged to her leave balance or leave without pay if the employee does not have a leave balance.

17. What type of notice must the employee provide if he or she plans to take PPL?

In order to take PPL, an employee must provide their supervisor with at least thirty (30) days' notice in advance of the first day of leave. If the employee learns of the birth or adoption less than thirty (30) days in advance, they shall give notice as soon as reasonably possible.

18. How do I request PPL?

Employees should request PPL by clicking here. Employees shall provide the reason and dates for the leave.

19. Do I have to provide any specific documentation in order to take PPL?

Within thirty (30) days of the birth or adoption of the child, the employee must submit a copy of the birth certificate or official documentation of the adoption. If documentation is not received, you will be required to reimburse the university for the salary you received during the period of PPL.

20. Can an employee choose to use their accrued leave or leave without pay instead of taking PPL?

No, if the employee's absence qualifies for PPL and is otherwise eligible, their absence will be designated as PPL.

21. Does PPL have to be taken consecutively?

No, the leave does not have to be taken consecutively. However, any PPL must be used within twelve (12) months of the qualifying birth or adoption. In addition, employees are still required to comply with the notice requirements stated in FAQ #7 to ensure their supervisor is provided advance notice of any PPL absences.

22. Does a supervisor have the ability to deny or approve an employee's PPL request?

No, PPL is approved by Human Resource Services.

23. What job protection do I have if I take PPL?

Employees who provide adequate notice shall be restored to their previous or similar positions with the same status, pay, length of service credit and seniority, wherever applicable, as of the date of their leave. Employees who request or use PPL will be protected from retaliation, interference, or discrimination for requesting or using the leave.

Employees who obtain PPL through fraud or misrepresentation (i.e., the employee falsified a qualifying condition) may not be returned to their previous or similar position and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees may also be required to reimburse the State for any PPL taken.

24. Who can I contact if I have questions about PPL?

Employees may contact Lisa Peacock via email at lisa.peacock@mtsu.edu or by calling 615-898-2248. If you have questions when Lisa Peacock is out of the office, please call us at 615-898-2929 or email hrs@mtsu.edu.

25. Where can I find more information about PPL?

This FAQ will be updated when additional information is added to the Department of Human Resources' website.

26. Will PPL be included in the employee's regular check?

If the employee's leave is entered and approved by the payroll deadline you will be paid the leave on your regular check. If not entered and submitted by the payroll deadline, the leave will be processed on the next payroll.

27. How/when is PPL to be entered in Web Time Entry or Leave Reporting and what time code should be used? Who is responsible for entering it?

Once approved for PPL, an employee's available PPL hours will be entered by Human Resources. The employee will be notified when hours are added to their leave balances.

The employee is responsible for entering the hours taken as Paid Parental Leave in their leave report or time sheet. After 12 months, any unused leave will be removed from the employee's leave balance.