

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS
LEAVES AND ABSENCES

DEC
(LEGAL)

Note: This policy addresses leaves in general. For provisions regarding the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), including FML for an employee seeking leave because of a relative's military service, see DECA. For provisions addressing leave for an employee's military service, see DECB.

State Leave

State Personal
Leave

A district shall provide employees with five days per year of state personal leave, with no limit on accumulation and no restrictions on transfer among districts. A district may provide additional personal leave beyond this minimum.

A board may adopt a policy governing an employee's use of state personal leave, except that the policy may not restrict the purposes for which the leave may be used.

Education Code 22.003(a)

State Sick Leave
(Accumulated Prior
to 1995)

District employees retain any sick leave accumulated as state minimum sick leave under former Section 13.904(a) of the Education Code. Accumulated state sick leave shall be used only for the following:

1. Illness of the employee.
2. Illness of a member of the employee's immediate family.
3. Family emergency.
4. Death in the employee's immediate family.
5. During military leave [see Use During Military Leave, below].

Acts of the 74th Legislative Session, Senate Bill 1, Sec. 66

Former Education
Service Center
Employees

A district shall accept the sick leave accrued by an employee who was formerly employed by a regional education service center (ESC), not to exceed five days per year for each year of employment. *Education Code 8.007*

Order of Use

A board's policy governing an employee's use of state personal leave may not restrict the order in which an employee may use state personal leave and any additional personal leave provided by the school district.

An employee who retains any state sick leave is entitled to use the state sick leave, state personal leave, or local personal leave in any order to the extent that the leave the employee uses is appropriate to the purpose of the leave.

Education Code 22.003(a), (f)

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Use During Military
Leave

An employee with available personal leave is entitled to use the leave for compensation during a term of active military service. "Personal leave" includes personal or sick leave available under former law or provided by local policy. *Education Code 22.003(d), (e)* [See DECB]

Temporary Disability

Each full-time educator shall be given a leave of absence for temporary disability at any time the educator's condition interferes with the performance of regular duties. The contract or employment of the educator may not be terminated while the educator is on a leave of absence for temporary disability. For purposes of temporary disability leave, pregnancy is considered a temporary disability.

At Employee's
Request

A request for a leave of absence for temporary disability must be made to a superintendent. The request must:

1. Be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming inability to work;
2. State the date requested by the educator for the leave to begin; and
3. State the probable date of return as certified by the physician.

By Board Authority

A board may adopt a policy providing for placing an educator on leave of absence for temporary disability if, in the board's judgment in consultation with a physician who has performed a thorough medical examination of the educator, the educator's condition interferes with the performance of regular duties. The educator shall have the right to present to the board testimony or other information relevant to the educator's fitness to continue in the performance of regular duties. [See DBB]

Return to Active
Duty

The educator shall notify the superintendent of a desire to return to active duty no later than the 30th day before the expected date of return. The notice must be accompanied by a physician's statement indicating the educator's physical fitness for the resumption of regular duties.

Notice

Placement

An educator returning to active duty after a leave of absence for temporary disability is entitled to an assignment at the school where the educator formerly taught, subject to the availability of an appropriate teaching position. In any event, the educator shall be placed on active duty no later than the beginning of the next school year. A principal at another campus voluntarily may approve the appointment of an employee who wishes to return from leave of absence. However, if no other principal approves the assignment by the beginning of the next school year, a district must place the

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	employee at the school at which the employee formerly taught or was assigned.
Length of Absence	A superintendent shall grant the length of leave of absence for temporary disability as required by the individual educator. A board may establish a maximum length for a leave of absence for temporary disability, but the maximum length may not be less than 180 calendar days. <i>Education Code 21.409; Atty. Gen. Op. DM-177 (1992); Atty. Gen. Op. H-352 (1974)</i>
Sick Leave Different from Temporary Disability Leave	An employee's entitlement to sick leave is unaffected by any concurrent eligibility for a leave of absence for temporary disability. The two types of leave are different, and each must be granted by its own terms. <i>Atty. Gen. Op. H-352 (1974)</i>
Assault Leave	In addition to all other days of leave, a district employee who is physically assaulted during the performance of regular duties is entitled to the number of days of leave necessary to recuperate from physical injuries sustained as a result of the assault. The leave shall be paid as set forth below at Coordination with Workers' Compensation Benefits. A district employee is physically assaulted if the person engaging in the conduct causing injury to the employee: 1. Could be prosecuted for assault; or 2. Could not be prosecuted for assault only because the person's age or mental capacity makes the person a nonresponsible person for purposes of criminal liability.
Notice of Rights	Any informational handbook a district provides to employees in an electronic or paper form or makes available by posting on the district's website must include notification of an employee's rights regarding assault leave, in the relevant section of the handbook. Any form used by a district through which an employee may request personal leave must include assault leave as an option.
Assignment to Assault Leave	At the request of an employee, a district must immediately assign the employee to assault leave. Days of assault leave may not be deducted from accrued personal leave. Assault leave may not extend more than two years beyond the date of the assault. Following an investigation of the claim, a district may change the assault leave status and charge the leave against the employee's accrued personal leave or against the employee's pay if insufficient accrued personal leave is available.

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Coordination with
Workers'
Compensation
Benefits

Notwithstanding any other law, assault leave benefits due to an employee shall be coordinated with temporary income benefits due from workers' compensation so the employee's total compensation from temporary income benefits and assault leave benefits will equal 100 percent of the employee's weekly rate of pay.

Education Code 22.003(b)-(c-1)

**Religious
Observances**

A district shall reasonably accommodate an employee's request to be absent from duty in order to participate in religious observances and practices, so long as it does not cause undue hardship on the conduct of district business. Such absence shall be without pay unless applicable paid leave is available. *42 U.S.C. 2000e(j), 2000e-2(a); Ansonia Bd. of Educ. v. Philbrook, 479 U.S. 60, (1986); Pinsker v. Joint Dist. No. 28J of Adams and Arapahoe Counties, 735 F.2d 388 (10th Cir. 1984)*

**Compliance with a
Subpoena**

An employer may not discharge, discipline, or penalize in any manner an employee because the employee complies with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding. *Labor Code 52.051(a)*

Note: A Texas federal court held that by omitting any reference to governmental entities from Labor Code 52.051, the state legislature intended to exclude governmental entities from the definition of "employer" contained within that section. Therefore, the statute did not waive a county's governmental immunity from liability for claims of retaliatory discharge of an employee for complying with a subpoena. *Alcala v. Texas Webb County*, 620 F. Supp. 2d 795 (S.D. Tex. 2009)

Jury Duty

An employee's accumulated personal leave may not be reduced because of the employee's service in compliance with a summons to appear as a juror [see DG]. *Education Code 22.006(c)*

**Attendance at
Truancy Hearing**

A district may not terminate the employment of a permanent employee because the employee is required under Family Code 65.062(b) to attend a truancy court hearing. *Family Code 65.063*

**Developmental
Leaves of Absence**

A board may grant a developmental leave of absence for study, research, travel, or other suitable purpose to an employee working in a position requiring a permanent teaching certificate who has served in a district at least five consecutive school years.

A developmental leave of absence may be granted for one school year at one-half salary or for one-half of a school year at full salary paid to the employee in the same manner, on the same schedule,

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and with the same deductions as if the employee were on full-time duty.

An employee on developmental leave shall continue to be a member of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas and shall be an employee of a district for purposes of participating in programs, holding memberships, and receiving benefits afforded by employment in a district.

Education Code 21.452

Leave for Sick Foster Child

An employer commits an unlawful employment practice under Labor Code, Chapter 21 if:

1. The employer administers a leave policy under which an employee is entitled to personal leave to care for or otherwise assist the employee's sick child; and
2. The leave policy does not treat in the same manner as an employee's biological or adopted minor child any foster child of the employee who:
 - a. Resides in the same household as the employee; and
 - b. Is under the conservatorship of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Labor Code 21.0595

Leave for Peace Officers

Quarantine Leave

A board shall develop and implement a paid quarantine leave policy for peace officers who are employed by the district and ordered to quarantine or isolate due to a possible or known exposure to a communicable disease while on duty.

A paid quarantine leave policy must:

1. Provide that a peace officer on paid quarantine leave receive:
 - a. All employment benefits and compensation, including leave accrual, pension benefits, and health benefit plan benefits for the duration of the leave; and
 - b. Reimbursement for reasonable costs related to the quarantine, including lodging, medical, and transportation; and
2. Require that the leave be ordered by the person's supervisor or the district's health authority.

A district may not reduce a peace officer's sick leave balance, vacation leave balance, holiday leave balance, or other paid leave

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balance in connection with paid quarantine leave taken in accordance with the district's policy.

Local Gov't Code 180.008

Mental Health
Leave

A district shall develop and adopt a policy allowing the use of mental health leave by peace officers and full-time telecommunicators authorized under Occupations Code 1701.405 employed by the district who experience a traumatic event in the scope of that employment.

The mental health leave policy must:

1. Provide clear and objective guidelines establishing the circumstances under which a peace officer or telecommunicator is granted and may use mental health leave;
2. Entitle a peace officer or telecommunicator to mental health leave without a deduction in salary or other compensation;
3. Enumerate the number of mental health leave days available to a peace officer or telecommunicator; and
4. Detail the level of anonymity for a peace officer or telecommunicator who takes mental health leave.

A mental health leave policy may provide a list of mental health services available to peace officers and telecommunicators in the area of the district.

Gov't Code 614.015

Line of Duty Illness
or Injury Leave

"Emergency medical services personnel" means a person described by Health and Safety Code 773.003, who is a paid employee of a district.

"Police officer" means a paid employee who is full-time, holds an officer license issued under Occupations Code Chapter 1701, and regularly serves in a professional law enforcement capacity in the police department of a district. The term includes the chief of the department.

Local Gov't Code 177A.001

A district shall provide to a police officer or emergency medical services personnel a leave of absence for an illness or injury related to the person's line of duty. The leave is with full pay for a period commensurate with the nature of the line of duty illness or injury. If necessary, the district shall continue the leave for at least one year.

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At the end of the leave of absence, the board may extend the leave of absence at full or reduced pay.

If the police officer or emergency medical services personnel is temporarily disabled by a line of duty injury or illness and the leave of absence and any extension granted by the board has expired, the person may use accumulated sick leave, vacation time, and other accrued benefits before the person is placed on temporary leave.

If the leave of absence and any extension granted by the board has expired, a police officer or emergency medical services personnel who requires additional leave shall be placed on temporary leave.

Local Gov't Code 177A.003

If able, a police officer or emergency medical services personnel may return to light duty while recovering from a temporary disability. If medically necessary, the light duty assignment may continue for at least one year.

After recovery from a temporary disability, a police officer or emergency medical services personnel shall be reinstated at the same rank and with the same seniority the person had before going on temporary leave. Another police officer or emergency medical services personnel may voluntarily do the work of the injured person until the person returns to duty.

Local Gov't Code 177A.004

Absence Control

Uniform enforcement of a reasonable absence-control rule is not retaliatory discharge. For example, a district that terminates an employee for violating a reasonable absence-control provision cannot be liable for retaliatory discharge as long as the rule is uniformly enforced. *Howell v. Standard Motor Prods., Inc.*, No. 4:99-CV-987-E, 2001 WL 196969 (N.D. Tex. Feb. 26, 2001) (Family and Medical Leave Act case); *Specialty Retailers v. DeMoranville*, 933 S.W.2d 490 (Tex. 1996) (age discrimination case); *Cont'l Coffee Prods. Co. v. Cazarez*, 937 S.W.2d 444 (Tex. 1996) (workers' compensation claim); *Gonzalez v. El Paso Nat. Gas Co.*, No. EP-81-CA-323, 1986 WL 4796 (W.D. Tex. Mar. 5, 1986) (sex discrimination case)

[Some employees may have protected status even after the expiration of all other leave. See DAA.]