

Northwestern partners with The Hartford to review and substantiate FMLA leaves and the use of Extended Sick Time and Birth/Adoption Parental Leave (BAPL) benefits. These leaves of absences are coordinated by the Benefits Office in collaboration with The Hartford and the school/unit.

## How to apply for a leave

1. **Contact The Hartford** 30 days prior to the leave, or as soon as possible, to apply for FMLA leave and/or Extended Sick Time benefits. *NOTE:* The Hartford will not approve a leave sooner than three days *BEFORE* the start of the leave. Claims can be submitted (policy 402164) via:

- Online: [www.thehartford.com/MYBENEFITS](http://www.thehartford.com/MYBENEFITS)
- Phone: 888-541-7283

Have ready:

- The nature of your claim or leave request.
- Last full day of active work.
- Your treating provider's name, address, phone, and fax numbers.



Keep in contact with The Hartford:

- When applying for a leave in advance, such as for a pregnancy or scheduled surgery, you must follow-up with The Hartford once the event has occurred to officially start your leave.
- Make sure you check in frequently on your claim to ensure all paperwork is received. The Hartford may request clarification or additional paperwork.
- If you need to request an extension to your leave, do so with The Hartford as soon as possible.
- To directly contact your claims administrator, [schedule an appointment](#) online.
- You are solely responsible for ensuring that all necessary documentation is submitted to support your leave application.

2. **Contact your manager** to inform them you have requested a leave of absence from work.

Have ready:

- The start date of your leave and your expected return to work date. But, you need **not** disclose medical information/condition to your manager.

Keep in contact with your manager:

- Reach out to your manager with any changes to your original dates of leave.
- Two weeks before your return-to-work date, let your manager know you still plan on returning on the approved date.
- If you request additional time off with The Hartford, let your manager know of the extension request.

3. Prepare for leave, where practical:

- Complete your timesheet through your last date of work.
- Update your Out-of-Office message for both your email and voice mail.
- Work with your manager to wrap up any projects before the start of your leave.

## What if your leave or extension request is not approved or partially approved?

Employees may apply for FMLA leave, which is federally job protected leave. This leave is typically unpaid, but pay could be continued via available paid time off (PTO) accruals. For leave requests pertaining to an employee's own medical condition, employees may apply for the [Extended Sick Time](#) (EST) benefit to receive 100% of their hourly rate or monthly salary for an approved extended illness or injury after a seven-calendar day elimination period, for up to six months. FMLA leave and EST may run concurrently.

FMLA leave and EST have different eligibility standards. Among other requirements, to qualify for FMLA leave for a personal medical issue, an employee must have a serious health condition, as defined by the Department of Labor. In contrast, to be eligible for EST benefits, an employee must, among other things, have a medically proven disabling impairment that substantially limits their ability to perform one or more of their essential job duties. In sum, FMLA has a lower eligibility standard than EST. So, it is possible to be approved for one benefit and not the other.

Here is what you can expect if you are:

### 1. Approved for FMLA but not EST

Your time away from work is job protected under FMLA. To receive pay while you are not working, you will need to use available paid time off (PTO) banks of [Incidental Sick Time](#) (IST), [Personal Floating Holidays](#) (PFH), and [Vacation](#); otherwise, use excused unpaid time. You may continue to apply for EST, and if approved, your PTO banks will be repopulated.

### 2. Approved for EST but not FMLA

This can happen if a) you have less than 12-months of eligible employment or b) you have exhausted your FMLA entitlement. In this case, your job is not protected, therefore in order to request job protected leave as an [accommodation](#) or another accommodation in order to return to work, you should contact the [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance](#). If there is no approved accommodation in place and you are separated from employment, your EST payments may continue for up to six months.

### 3. Not approved for both FMLA and EST

This can happen if a) you have exhausted your FMLA and/or EST entitlement or b) you do not meet eligibility standards. In this case your job is not protected, therefore to request job-protected leave as an accommodation or another accommodation in order to return to work, you should contact the [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance](#). You may continue to apply for FMLA and/or EST, but approval is not guaranteed. If you are not approved for FMLA, EST, or an accommodation, you should contact your manager or [HRBP \(hrbp@northwestern.edu\)](mailto:hrbp@northwestern.edu) to discuss your options.

## Resources for other types of leave

- [Faculty Medical or Parental Leave Outside FMLA and EST](#)
- [Staff Birth/Adoption Parental Leave](#)
- [Worker's Compensation](#)
- [Personal Leave](#)
- [Repatriation Leave](#)