FMLA and Faculty Family Leave FAQs

1. Whom do I contact?

- **FMLA**: Contact The Hartford either online at [www.TheHartfordatWork.com](http://www.TheHartfordatWork.com), or by phone at 1-888-541-7283. This initial phone call is for the request intake, and The Hartford will collect certain pieces of information. Additionally, they will advise on the next steps to complete the process.
  - **The Hartford will request the following information during your call**:
    - Name, address, policy number and other key identification information.
    - Name of your department and last day of active full-time work.
    - Your manager’s or Absence Management Consultant’s name and phone number.
    - The nature of your claim.
    - Your treating physician’s name, address and phone and fax numbers.

- **Faculty Family Leave**: Contact your school dean’s office – at least 60 days prior to a planned leave - to arrange academic responsibilities and faculty family leave, if eligible. Your school dean’s office will not ask for details about your leave, but they will need to know approximate dates of the request.

The following is intended as additional interpretative guidance for Northwestern’s FMLA and Faculty Family Leave policy. All members of the faculty are encouraged to discuss these and any additional questions with their respective Department Chairs, Deans, and/or the Office of the Provost.

2. What is FMLA?

   **FMLA** is the Family and Medical Leave Act. It entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.

3. What is Northwestern University’s Faculty Family Leave?

   Northwestern University’s Faculty Family Leave is a policy which offers paid childbearing, adoption and childrearing leaves for eligible faculty. These leaves should be coordinated with leaves as provided for under FMLA. See [http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/faculty-leave-and-holidays/policy-on-faculty-family-leave.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/faculty-leave-and-holidays/policy-on-faculty-family-leave.html)

4. What is the difference between FMLA and Faculty Family Leave?

   **FMLA** is a federally-required unpaid leave (for eligible employees). **Faculty Family Leave** is the University’s paid leave offered for childbearing, adoption and childrearing for eligible faculty.

FMLA FAQs

1. Who is the Hartford and why are they involved in the medical leave process?

   Northwestern University is partnering with The Hartford to handle the faculty medical leave process. The Hartford already handles long term disability for faculty and staff at the University. Partnering with Hartford will enable the faculty to maintain confidentiality of medical information. Additionally, The Hartford will administer FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act). See #2 for more details.

2. To whom does FMLA apply?

   FMLA applies to employees who have worked for at least 12 months and have at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12 month period immediately preceding the leave. See [http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.htm](http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.htm)

3. What if I’m not eligible for FMLA?

   If you are not eligible for FMLA, The Hartford will notify you and HR Benefits. You may be able to take a personal unpaid leave, arranged with your school dean’s office.
4. Could I be eligible for FMLA but not Faculty Family Leave?
   Yes. If you are a benefits-eligible faculty member with more than one year but less than 3 years of service, you qualify for FMLA but not Faculty Family Leave.

5. When do I need to request a leave?
   As soon as you know you need to take a leave, or at least 60 days in advance, please contact your school dean’s office and The Hartford.

6. Do I need to contact my department or school dean’s office in addition to the Hartford?
   Yes. This contact is to ensure any University-related benefits (such as Faculty Family Leave and courseload reductions) are initiated, if you are eligible.

7. What if I need additional leave; how do I extend my leave?
   As soon as you know you require additional leave time, please contact The Hartford and your school dean’s office.

8. What responsibilities do I have to ensure that my existing academic commitments are addressed while I am on leave?
   You are expected to contact your school dean’s office to ensure your academic commitments are addressed while on leave.

9. Can I extend my probationary period for tenure due to the birth, adoption or rearing of a child? If so, what is the process?
   Yes. Please contact your school dean’s office to request a tenure clock extension.

10. If I need an immediate leave whom do I contact?
    If you require an immediate leave, please contact The Hartford, either online at www.TheHartfordatWork.com, or at 1-888-541-7283.
    Please also contact your school dean’s office directly, if possible. While The Hartford will notify HR Benefits and your dean’s office regarding your request, the sooner your dean’s office is notified of the leave, appropriate planning for your academic responsibilities can take place.

11. Who has access to my medical information?
    With this collaboration, only The Hartford will have access to sensitive medical information. This information is not shared.

12. Will The Hartford be able to answer questions regarding my additional benefits (paid leave, additional leave, salary, teaching responsibilities, etc)?
    No, The Hartford is reviewing and approving the FMLA portion of your leave only. Please contact your school’s Dean’s office to obtain information on additional items.

**FACULTY FAMILY LEAVE FAQs**

1. To whom does the Faculty Family Leave Policy apply?
   The following faculty members are eligible for childbearing, adoption, and childrearing leave under the policy:
   - Full-time, benefits eligible, tenured or tenure track faculty; and
   - Other full-time, benefits eligible instructional faculty who, at the time of the birth or adoption, have completed three years of continuous full-time service on the Northwestern faculty or who are serving on an academic appointment of three years or longer at the time of the leave.
Please note that individuals with research faculty appointments and persons who hold faculty appointments but whose activities are primarily non-instructional (i.e. administrative) are ineligible for the leaves described in the policy. The policy also does not apply to administrators and staff who have courtesy faculty appointments, but whose primary function within the University is non-instructional (i.e. administrative).

2. What if I do not meet the policy’s eligibility requirements?
Faculty who do not meet the policy’s eligibility requirements remain eligible for “Leave for Childbearing” as described in the Northwestern University Faculty Handbook, available online at: http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/faculty/handbook.pdf
Policies relating to personal leaves of absence and family leave for staff can be found in the Staff Handbook, available online at: http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/forms/oncampus/handbook.pdf

3. What types of leave are available under the Faculty Family Leave Policy?
The policy identifies three types of leave:
- “Childbearing” leave refers to paid leave provided to eligible women faculty members following the birth of a child;
- “Adoption” leave is paid leave provided to eligible faculty members (both men and women) following the adoption of a child; and
- “Childrearing” leave is paid leave provided to eligible faculty members (both men and women) who are at least an equal partner in caring for a newly born or newly adopted child.

4. My partner and I have adopted a child. What leave is available to us under the policy?
Eligible faculty members who have adopted a child may take paid adoption leave and are also eligible for paid childrearing leave.

5. May I use childrearing leave consecutively with childbearing leave?
Requests for childrearing leave are generally granted, depending upon the faculty member’s specific circumstances. If approved, childrearing leave may be taken consecutively with childbearing leave. At a minimum, the approved leave must commence within twelve months of the birth or adoption of your child. For more information regarding the timing of leaves and the approval and appeals process, please refer to Section III of the policy, “Length and Timing of Leaves”, as well as Question 13, below.

6. My partner and I are both Northwestern faculty and we each meet the policy’s eligibility requirements. What leave is available to us following the birth or adoption of a child?
In the above situation, the faculty member who gave birth to the child is eligible to take paid childbearing leave. In the event of an adoption, both faculty members may take paid adoption leave. In either a birth or adoption scenario, both faculty members would also qualify for paid childrearing leave, subject to the approval of the Hartford, upon the recommendation of their respective deans.

7. After the birth of our child, my husband plans to stay home to provide full-time care for our newborn during the day. Does this impact my eligibility to take childrearing leave?
No. Northwestern does not consider the employment status of your spouse or partner in determining your eligibility for faculty family leave. As long as you will share equal parenting responsibility with your partner, you are eligible to take paid childrearing leave.

8. What leave is available if I am hospitalized or placed on bed rest during the course of my pregnancy?
Faculty members who are unable to work due to a medically-certified disability related to pregnancy or childbearing are eligible for paid medical leave, as set forth in the “Medical Leave” section of the Faculty Handbook, available online at: http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/faculty/handbook.pdf
Requests for medical leave must be accompanied by a statement from a physician describing the medical reason for the leave and the estimated duration of the leave.

This medical leave is independent of the leave provided by the Faculty Family Leave Policy and does not affect the
amount of Family Leave available. In circumstances where a hospitalization or bed rest immediately precedes the birth of a child, medical leave ends and childbearing leave begins upon the faculty member’s discharge from the hospital following the birth of the baby.

9. I am expecting twins. Can I take two childbearing leaves, one for each baby?  
   No. One paid childbearing leave is available per birth or adoption event. The number of children involved does not increase the length of paid childbearing, childrearing, or adoption leaves granted for that event. However, you may qualify for additional leave, as discussed in Question 10, below.

10. What if I need additional leave?  
The policy’s paid childbearing, childrearing, and adoption leaves are independent of leaves taken pursuant to the provisions of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Accordingly, faculty members also may be eligible for additional unpaid FMLA leave, assuming that they meet the FMLA’s eligibility requirements. For additional information on FMLA leave, please refer to the “Personal Leaves of Absence” provision in the Faculty Handbook, available online at: http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/faculty/handbook.pdf

11. What responsibilities do I have to ensure that my existing academic commitments are addressed while I am on Faculty Family Leave?  
As set forth in the policy, faculty members on childbearing, adoption, and childrearing leaves are not required to fulfill University service responsibilities, such as membership on committees, during their leave. During the academic year in which the leave is taken, eligible faculty members receive a reduction in their annual teaching load corresponding to the length of the leave. It is assumed that no faculty member’s teaching load will be reduced to less than one course per academic year because of childbearing/adoptive and/or childrearing.

The faculty member’s School or Department is responsible for identifying and hiring replacement teaching assistance as necessary, with the cost for the replacement to be borne by the respective School. Faculty are not required to “make up” missed courses in subsequent terms. Faculty on leave retain responsibility for any necessary supervision to students pursuing such work as undergraduate senior honors, masters, or doctoral research.

12. Can I extend my probationary period for tenure due to the birth, adoption, or rearing of a child?  
Faculty members may request extensions of their pretenure probationary period due to the birth, adoption, or rearing of a child. A one-year extension is granted to mothers following childbirth, and to parents following adoption. An additional one-year extension for childrearing may be granted to a parent who is at least an equal partner in caring for a child. Extensions of the probationary period for childbirth, adoption, and/or childrearing are limited to a total of two years within a faculty member’s pretenure probationary period, regardless of the number of children.

All requests for an extension of the probationary period must be made by the faculty member in writing to the faculty member’s Dean and should be submitted prior to the beginning of the tenure review. Subject to the above two-year limitation, requests to stop the tenure clock for a one-year period following childbirth or adoption are automatically approved. Extension requests related to childrearing require the approval of the Provost, based upon the recommendation of the Dean. Such requests will generally receive favorable consideration, depending upon the faculty member’s specific circumstances.

If the request is granted, the faculty member’s Dean will provide written confirmation of the extended probationary period. Additional information, including further detail regarding extension criteria and the procedures for requesting extensions, is available at: http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/faculty/policy/extendprob.html

13. What is the status of my health insurance benefits while I am on Faculty Family Leave?  
While a faculty member is on paid leave, Northwestern will continue to pay its share of health insurance premiums, and the faculty member will be responsible for his or her portion of premiums. Additional information regarding benefits is available online at: http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits

14. What is the procedure for requesting leave under the Faculty Family Leave policy?  
For childbearing and adoption leaves, the faculty member is expected to notify his or her school’s dean and The Hartford
at least sixty days prior to the beginning of the leave (for eligible faculty members with a primary appointment in the law or medical school) or at least sixty days prior to the beginning of the academic term during which the leave will take place (for all other schools). In cases of adoption, a shorter notification period is sometimes necessary. For childrearing leave, eligible faculty members are expected to submit a request for leave to the school dean and The Hartford at least sixty days prior to the beginning of the leave period (for eligible faculty members with a primary appointment in the law or medical school) or at least sixty days prior to the beginning of the academic term requested as the leave period (for all other schools). These notice requirements are designed to balance the faculty member’s interest in taking leave with the University’s need to make appropriate contingency plans to ensure continuity in its academic programs and other services.

15. If I do not believe my department chair or school dean is dealing fairly with me regarding my access to Family Leave, is there any opportunity for appeal?

Yes. Concerns about actions of a department chair should be directed to the school dean. If your concern involves actions at the level of the school dean, you should discuss your concerns with the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs (847-491-7040) as soon as possible following the contested decision.

16. Whom should I contact if I have questions about the Faculty Family Leave Policy?

Faculty members are encouraged to discuss any questions or issues relating to the Family Leave policy with their respective Department Chairs, Dean’s Offices, and/or the Office of the Provost.

17. What resources are available on campus to assist in work/life planning?

Faculty members are encouraged to explore the services and resources offered by Northwestern’s Work Life, Child & Family Resources Office. These services include:

1. child care referrals;
2. information regarding backup child care; and
3. checklists for evaluating quality child care. Additional information is available online at http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/childcare/solutions/index.html

Support for new parents is also available through the Women’s Center ((847) 491-7360 or (312) 503-3400) and through the Faculty-Staff Assistance Program: http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/plans/fsap/index.html