

# Faculty Guide to Filing a Parental Leave of Absence with MetLife

## Northwestern's Faculty Family Leave policy:

This policy provides all tenure-track faculty, and any full-time non-tenure-track faculty with at least 3 years of service (or who are serving in an appointment that will bring them to 3 years of service), with leaves of absence related to the birth or adoption of a child . The length and timing of these leaves is described in detail on the Office of the Provost's [Faculty Leaves website](#).

## MetLife's role:

University-provided parental benefits are offered within the legal frameworks of state and federal regulations, principally the Federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). To comply with these regulations, Northwestern is required to assess and inform you about your eligibility for state and federal family benefits. To do this, the University works with a third-party benefits administrator, MetLife, to verify the details of the birth with your physician (or, in the event of an adoption, to collect a copy of the adoption paperwork from you). MetLife assists by securing and reviewing your documentation and assessing your eligibility for leave under the FMLA.

In some circumstances, the University's Faculty Family Leave benefits are more generous than FMLA requires, but it is critical for faculty taking parental leaves to work through MetLife for two reasons. First, MetLife will serve as a secure third party to gather and review documentation related to the leave. Second, the University is required to report all FMLA usage to the federal government, and MetLife assists in tracking this. Please note that any leave of absence time taken for parental reasons counts as usage of your available FMLA (unpaid) leave, but since the University's faculty family leaves are always paid leaves, there will be no interruption in your pay or benefits.

## How do I request a family leave?

To request a family (aka parental) leave, follow these steps:

Contact MetLife at [1-800-396-8876](tel:1-800-396-8876) or online at <https://mybenefits.metlife.com>. You should do this as soon as the schedule for your planned leave becomes clear to you. For childbirths, MetLife will need to contact your physician as part of this process, so please be sure to have the physician's name, phone, and fax number handy before contacting MetLife.

You will also need to contact your designated administrator within the faculty member's school Dean's or Faculty Affairs Office – at least 60 days prior to a planned leave whenever possible – to arrange academic responsibilities. Faculty in the Feinberg School of Medicine may follow a different process and should contact their department administrator or the Feinberg Faculty Affairs Office for information ([fao@northwestern.edu](mailto:fao@northwestern.edu)). Your school dean's office will not ask for details about your leave, but they will need to know approximate dates of the request.

## Speaking with MetLife:

Some questions MetLife may ask you, and what they mean:

| Question:   | What it means:   | Guidance on your response:  |
|---|--|---|
| “What is the first day of work you missed?”                   | “What is your first day of leave”  | It is understood that faculty schedules vary, and you may not be in your office, lab, or classroom every day. For the purposes of this question, provide the first day that you will formally be on leave, even if you were not scheduled to be on campus that day.   |
| “What was your last day worked”                               | “What was the last day before your leave began/will begin?”  | It is understood that faculty schedules vary, and you may not be in your office, lab, or classroom every day. It is recommended that you tell MetLife the last day before your leave of absence is to begin, regardless of whether you were scheduled to be on campus that day.   |
| “How are you covering your time off before the baby is born?” | “It sounds like you are going to be out on leave before the day that your baby is born [or: before the adoption is finalized] – how are you accounting for this time?” | <b>Only applicable to faculty in schools which operate on the academic quarter system:</b> For tenure-track and full-time, non-research non-tenure-eligible faculty, Northwestern’s Faculty Family Leave policy provides for faculty to go on leave at the beginning of the academic quarter in which their baby is due. It is proper for you to advise MetLife that your faculty benefits allow you to take a leave for the full academic quarter in which your child is born. |
| “Do you know your HR contact’s name and phone number?”        | If we need to confirm any information with Northwestern, whom should we call?  | You can provide the contact information for the faculty affairs representative in your school, or you can refer to Alex Rot, Assistant Provost for Faculty Operations in the Office of the Provost, 847/467-4127, <a href="mailto:alex.rot@northwestern.edu">alex.rot@northwestern.edu</a>  |
| “Are you hourly or salaried?”                                 |  | For the purposes of MetLife, all benefits-eligible faculty are considered salaried.   |
| “Do you work Monday-Friday, 9-5?”                             | “Are you a full-time employee?”  | Of course faculty frequently work evenings and weekends as well, but what you should communicate to MetLife is that you are full-time (if this is true), and that your typical weekly schedule would be considered your standard full-time schedule (if this is true).  |
| “Have you ever been a temporary employee?”                    | “Were you ever employed as a temporary staff member at Northwestern?”  | Likely the answer is no, though if you have worked as a Northwestern temp you should say so.  |

## What to expect after speaking to MetLife:

Following your conversation with MetLife, MetLife will reach out to your physician's office to gather the necessary medical documentation to support your leave request. It is best if you make your physician aware that they will be contacted in this manner. MetLife may also ask for your support in this documentation-gathering process.

In the event that you are adopting a child, MetLife will provide guidance regarding what documentation you should submit to them to verify the adoption; depending on the details of your adoption case, this may be formal adoption paperwork, or may be other documentation which confirms the child's name, the date of the adoption/placement, and that you are the individual adopting the child.

MetLife will also issue you an eligibility letter confirming your eligibility for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Again, remember that Northwestern's leave policies are usually more generous than what the FMLA requires, so this determination letter from MetLife may only reference a portion of your leave – the portion required by the FMLA, i.e., 12 weeks. Do not be alarmed by this; University parental leaves are granted in one quarter increments (except in the Feinberg School of Medicine, Pritzker School of Law, and Northwestern's campus in Qatar, where they are granted in 10-week increments). If you have any questions regarding the amount of leave you are eligible for under Northwestern's policy, you can contact your school's dean's office or faculty affairs office, or the Office of the Provost (Alex Rot, Assistant Provost for Faculty Operations, 847-467-4127, [alex.rot@northwestern.edu](mailto:alex.rot@northwestern.edu)).

**Additionally, if you are a tenure-track faculty who is new to the University (i.e., less than 6 months),** MetLife may state (verbally, and in a follow-up letter confirming eligibility for a leave of absence) that you are ineligible for medical leave or FMLA leave. Do not be alarmed by this; although you have not yet met the service requirement for medical leave (6 months) or FMLA leave (12 months), your eligibility for the Northwestern faculty family leave policy supersedes other leave policies, and you are therefore still eligible for parental leaves as described on the Office of the Provost's [Faculty Leaves website](#). In the event that this occurs, contact the Office of the Provost (Alex Rot, Assistant Provost for Faculty Operations, 847-467-4127, [alex.rot@northwestern.edu](mailto:alex.rot@northwestern.edu)), who will work with your school and department to confirm your eligibility for a leave of absence.

Once final documentation is received by MetLife, you will receive a determination letter certifying that your documentation has been received and approved.

In the event that your child is born earlier than expected, you should contact MetLife to inform them of the updated date of birth (and provide any documentation they request, such as the birth certificate or hospital discharge paperwork). You should also speak with your department and/or the Office of the Provost to discuss if, and how, to best adjust the timing of your leave of absence.

Faculty members should discuss their upcoming leave of absence with their Department Chair, and are encouraged to direct any questions regarding their leave, teaching assignments, or other issues to their respective Dean's Office or Faculty Affairs Office. If you have additional questions about eligibility or the amount of leave available to you, you may contact the Office of the Provost. More information on faculty leaves can also be found here:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/faculty-leaves/>

## For further questions:

If you have any questions regarding the amount of leave you are eligible for under Northwestern's policy, you can contact your school's dean's office or faculty affairs office, or the Office of the Provost (Alex Rot, Assistant Provost for Faculty Operations, 847-467-4127, [alex.rot@northwestern.edu](mailto:alex.rot@northwestern.edu)).