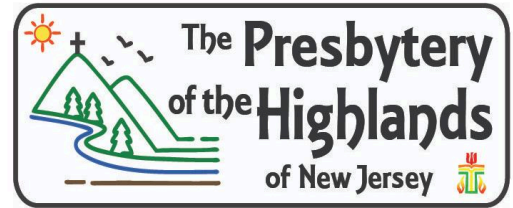


Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey

Family and Medical Leave Policy



Introduction

The celebration, nurture, and encouragement of family life are central to the ministry of the Church. In times of joy and in times of sorrow, congregations are called to extend care not only to one another, but also to their pastors and their families. Faithful ministry includes recognizing the importance of family well-being and providing appropriate support during significant life events.

In response to this calling, and in alignment with current requirements that family and medical leave provisions be included in Terms of Call, the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey has developed this policy to guide sessions and employing bodies in their care for pastors and Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish minimum standards for family and medical leave that must be included in all Terms of Call within the Presbytery. These guidelines are intended to:

1. Provide a clear and consistent framework for Family and Medical Leave for pastors and CREs; and
2. Ensure that all Terms of Call include provisions for paid family and medical leave.

These standards represent a minimum expectation. Congregations and employing bodies are encouraged to respond to individual circumstances with generosity, flexibility, and compassion.

Definition

All full- and part-time minister members serving in installed or covenant positions are entitled to job-protected leave for qualifying family and medical reasons.

Eligibility

Eligibility for Family and Medical Leave extends to all installed or covenant pastors and CREs within the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey, regardless of full-time or part-time status.

Guidelines

Medically Certified Disability of a Pastor

Pastors who are temporarily disabled, as certified by a licensed physician or psychologist, shall consult with the Committee on Ministry (COM) and the Board of Pensions (BoP) for guidance regarding short-term or long-term disability coverage and procedures.

Maternity, Paternity, and Parental Leave

- Pastors welcoming a new child through birth, adoption, or guardianship are entitled to **12 weeks of leave**.
- The timing of this leave shall be determined by the pastor.
- Sessions are encouraged to be flexible should a pastor request more or less than 12 weeks.
- Leave may occur before and/or after the arrival of the child.

Family Leave Compensation

- Sessions shall provide **full salary and benefits** for the duration of the 12-week leave.
- If leave extends beyond 12 weeks, compensation arrangements may be negotiated, including partial salary, unpaid leave, or the use of accrued vacation time.
- Study leave, vacation, or sabbatical/renewal leave should not be scheduled immediately before or after parental leave without consultation with the session and COM.

Family Care and Bereavement Leave

- No minimum duration is required; however, up to **12 weeks per year** is recommended.
- Leave may be taken intermittently over a 12-month period.
- This leave applies when a spouse, child, parent, or dependent:
 - Has a serious health condition,
 - Is entering long-term care, or
 - Has died.

Additional Considerations

- Study leave shall not be used for family or medical leave purposes.
- In the event of miscarriage or stillbirth, the pastor shall be granted the same parental leave that would have been provided following a full-term pregnancy.
- Leave periods are annual and **do not accrue**.
- The Committee on Ministry shall be informed whenever family or medical leave is taken.

Session Responsibilities During Leave

The session is responsible for ensuring the continuity of the congregation's ministry during a pastor's leave. This includes arranging and funding:

- Pulpit supply
- Pastoral care, including hospital and emergency visitation
- Teaching, leadership, and program responsibilities

If these responsibilities create hardship, the session is encouraged to seek assistance from the Presbytery through its COM liaison. The Committee on Ministry will appoint a moderator pro tempore for the session during the pastor's absence.

Additional Guidance

If both Parental Leave and Family Care/Bereavement Leave are needed within the same calendar year, sessions should consult with the Committee on Ministry and the Presbytery Leader for guidance.