



## Sick Leave & Personal Leave

### Sick Leave – a Right, Not a Privilege

Article 30, Sec. C of the contract provides sick leave for personal illness, injury, and other excused absences “*such as medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment impossible to schedule on non-duty days.*” Sick leave may not be used for vacations or as a substitute for personal leave. However you may use any available personal leave when you are sick and have exhausted your sick leave.

Since many teachers are also parents, spouses, or partners or have responsibility for other family members, sick leave may also be used for illness in the immediate family. In Section A (pg. 68), a family member is defined as a “*child, parent, brother, sister, husband, wife.*” In addition, it includes anyone who “*lives regularly in the unit member’s household*” and anyone for whom the unit member has durable power of attorney.

Sick leave slips should be submitted as soon as possible once a staff member is aware of the need for an absence. Last minute leave notices are more difficult for the substitute calling system to fill.

You should not be pressured to come to school when utilizing sick leave. You should not receive phone calls asking why you’ve called in sick. Medical documentation (i.e. – a doctor’s note) may only be required for sick leave usage if you use five or more consecutive days for sick leave, or if MCPS has reason to suspect abuse. However a request for documentation for four days or less must come from the Employee and Retiree Services Center (ERSC), and not simply from your principal or supervisor. ERSC serves as a check to ensure that such requests are justified and not arbitrary.

Unused sick leave is accumulated on an unlimited basis. Upon termination of employment, unused earned sick leave is cashed-out at 25% or 30% of current value, provided you have worked for MCPS for at least five years. Upon retirement, unused sick leave is also added in to your years-of-creditable-service: increasing your monthly pension benefit.

## Short-term Personal Leave

Personal leave is provided for every unit member to “*conduct personal business of a nature that cannot be scheduled on any non-duty day.*” The contract goes on to say in **Article 30, Sec. Q** that “*No specific reason for such personal leave shall be required or solicited*” (unless immediately before or after a holiday, vacation, or professional development day, in which case, a reason may be solicited). Personal leave will only be approved if you have the days/hours to cover the request.

While personal leave is usually approved, the principal can deny it: if s/he believes “*that adequate provisions for continuing the school program are insufficient.*” Primarily this comes into play when large numbers of staff have requested leave on the same day. (ex. before and after a holiday), or in situations where you are integral to the functioning of a particular program on that date that cannot be fulfilled by a substitute.

Personal leave should be requested – in writing – at least one day in advance of the expected absence. More advanced notice is preferable – especially to increase the likelihood of sub coverage. Additionally, if the requested date is one that may see a large number of similar requests, most schools will approve on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Simply stating personal on the leave slip is sufficient. Personal leave should be approved unless it is before a holiday, other break, or during a testing situation. In these circumstances/situations you should provide a brief reason and ensure a substitute has been secured.

Once approved, personal leave days should not be rescinded.

If an emergency need for personal leave occurs with less than a day’s notice, the appropriate school official should be notified prior to the start of the duty day to be taken off, in accord with local school procedures, as well as the sub line ([sems.mcpsmd.org](http://sems.mcpsmd.org) or 301-279-3998).

Full-time MCEA unit members are provided 3 personal days per year. Part-time unit members receive a prorated allocation. Up to two days of personal leave days can be carried over each year so a staff member may have up to 5 personal days available to them in a given year.

At the end of the year, any unused personal leave (in excess of the 2 days that may be carried over) is automatically transferred to the unit member’s accumulated sick leave.

If you have any questions about leave, you can contact either the MCEA UniServ Director responsible for assistance at your worksite, or the MCEA Help Desk ([helpdesk@mceanea.org](mailto:helpdesk@mceanea.org)), at 301-294-6232.