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MEMO

Item No. 17

To: City of Ames Mayor and City Council
From: Brian Phillips, Assistant City Manager
Date: April 27, 2021
Subject: Extension of Amended Leave Policy During COVID-19 Emergency

On March 23, 2020, Ames City Council approved an amended leave policy for City staff. This amended policy provided up to 80 hours of special COVID-19 leave for employees and it provided 2/3 pay for employees covered under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for up to an additional 400 hours when the employee needed to care for children due to a pandemic-related school closure. This policy fully complies with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

These amended benefits were initially set to expire on December 31, 2020. However, City Council made the decision to extend these benefits until February 28, 2021, and April 30, 2021, because the federal government had not made a plan to introduce another similar package that would provide additional benefits after December 31, 2020. **As a similar plan has not yet been introduced, it is requested that the existing amended leave policy be extended until June 30, 2021, or until such a time as a similar package is approved at the federal level – whichever date is sooner.**

Extending this leave policy will provide some level of relief to employees who continue to be impacted by COVID-19.

AMENDED LEAVE POLICY DURING COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Since the President of the United States signed a law increasing leave benefits in times of COVID-19 pandemic, and the Governor of Iowa has declared a state of emergency due to pandemic conditions of the COVID-19 virus, the City of Ames will amend the standard leave policies. Upon approval by the City Council on March 24, 2020, the amendment will be in effect retroactively from March 23, 2020 until no later than ~~December 31, 2020~~ ~~February 28, 2021~~ ~~April 30, 2021~~ June 30, 2021.

The following policy amendment meets or exceeds the requirements of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA).

The purpose of COVID-19 leave is to provide some relief to employees dealing with the impact of COVID-19. Employees may be eligible to use up to 80 hours total of COVID-19 leave in any combination, paid at their regular rate of pay, if they are experiencing one of the following circumstances. Any unused leave will not rollover.

ABSENCES ELIGIBLE FOR COVID-19 LEAVE

For employees quarantined or sick with COVID-19

The City will grant up to 80 hours of paid COVID-19 leave* to employees who have been required or advised to quarantine by a medical provider or a county, state, or federal agency, or who have been advised by a medical provider they have confirmed or presumptively confirmed COVID-19. Employees must complete a Request for COVID -19 Leave form and provide it to Human Resources before the special pay will be granted. If the employee is unable to return to work after the COVID-19 leave has been exhausted, they may use accrued and unused sick leave, vacation leave, or compensatory time to cover their remaining absence.

Employees must follow CDC or Iowa Department of Public Health guidelines for returning to work after the illness.

****all COVID-19 leave will be prorated for part-time employees.***

For employees caring for an individual quarantined or sick with COVID-19

The City will grant up to 80 hours of paid COVID-19 leave* to those employees providing direct care for an individual required or advised to be quarantined by a medical provider, or a county, state, or federal agency, or an individual who has been advised by a medical provider they have confirmed or presumptively confirmed COVID-19. Employees must complete a Request for COVID -19 Leave form and provide it to Human Resources before the special pay will be granted. If the employee continues to care for the individual after the COVID-19 leave has been exhausted, they may use accrued and unused sick leave, vacation leave, or compensatory time to cover their remaining absence. Absences longer than two weeks must have documentation certifying additional leave is necessary.

Based on minimum staffing needs required to maintain operations, the City may exempt employees serving in an emergency responder role from this provision of COVID-19 leave.

Employees must follow CDC or Iowa Department of Public Health guidelines for returning to work after caring for an individual impacted by COVID-19.

****all COVID-19 leave will be prorated for part-time employees.***

For employees with children impacted by school district/daycare closures

This section serves as a “qualifying need related to a public health emergency” under the FFCRA.

If schools or daycare facilities where the children of employees attend close due COVID-19, the City will make every effort to adjust hours, create an alternative work schedule, or identify an alternative childcare arrangement in order to maintain services. If no alternative work solutions are appropriate, the City will grant COVID-19 leave* to cover up to 80 hours of the closure. Employees must complete a Request for COVID -19 Leave form and provide it to Human Resources before the special pay will be granted. If the employee is unable to return to work after the COVID-19 leave has been exhausted, they will receive 2/3 of their normal pay for up to an additional 400 hours. Employees may use accrued and unused sick leave, vacation leave, or compensatory time to cover the remaining 1/3 of their pay

In general, COVID-19 leave will only be granted during the hours a child would normally be in school or daycare and only to who are not able to adjust their hours or work from home, where alternative childcare is unavailable, AND whose children:

- Are under the age of 18
- Attend daycare or a K-12 school, or
- Have special needs and would be unable to care for themselves while their parents are at work.

Based on minimum staffing needs required to maintain operations, the City may exempt employees serving in an emergency responder role from this provision of COVID-19 leave and/or FFCRA family leave.

****all COVID-19 leave will be prorated for part-time employees.***

ABSENCES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR COVID-19 LEAVE

For employees choosing to self-isolate

Employees who are not required or advised by a medical provider or any county, state, or federal agency to be quarantined and choose to self-isolate must use accrued and unused vacation leave, accrued and unused compensatory time, or leave without pay to cover their absence. As with any form of voluntary leave, these absences must be approved by the employee’s supervisor.

CONTACT INFORMATION

In all cases of absence, employees must provide current contact information (including phone number and email address) to their supervisor.

Request for COVID -19 Leave

Employee Name :

Department:___ Position:

Approximate Dates of Request: To

Reason for Request (check at least one):

- Employee’s own COVID-19 illness or required or advised quarantine
- Care for individual during COVID-19 illness or required or advised quarantine
- School or daycare closure due to a COVID-19 pandemic

Sign the appropriate certification below:

Employee’s own COVID-19 illness or required or advised quarantine

I certify that I have either been diagnosed with COVID-19, or presumptively diagnosed with COVID-19; or I have been required or advised to quarantine by a federal agency, state or county agency, or a medical provider.

Name of the medical provider or agency advising or requiring the absence

Employee Signature

Care for an individual during COVID-19 illness or required or advised quarantine

I certify that I am providing direct care for an individual who has either been diagnosed with COVID-19, or presumptively diagnosed with COVID-19; or who has been required or advised to quarantine by a federal agency, state or county agency, or a medical provider

Name of Medical Provider Or Agency Advising or requiring the absence

Employee Signature

School or daycare closure due to a COVID-19 pandemic

I certify that my child's school or daycare has been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, I certify my child:

- Is under the age of 18
- Attends daycare, K-12 school, or
- Has special needs and would be unable to care for themselves while I am at work.

Has your supervisor made an alternate schedule, hours, or work from home scenario available to you? **YES** **NO**

If yes, you will be required to utilize the alternate arrangement prior to being approved for COVID-19 leave

Name of School or Daycare that has been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Employee Signature

Required Approvers: Signatures Required

Department Head

Human Resources Director

City Manager

COVID-19 Leave is:

Approved

Denied