

Sick Leave FAQs for Civilian Employees and Fire Fighters

1. When does the new sick leave ordinance take effect?

The ordinance is effective Saturday, September 21, 2013.

2. Does the new ordinance apply to me?

It applies to all full-time municipal (civilian) employees and classified employees of the Fire Department.

3. What changed in the sick leave ordinance?

The change to the ordinance allows employees flexibility to use sick leave for the care of a family member due to the family member's bona fide illness, disease or injury.

4. Under what circumstances can I use my sick leave?

You can use your sick leave to take time off for:

- your own bona fide illness, disease or off duty injury;
- your visits with a health care provider for consultations, testing or treatments; and
- the care of a family member due to his/her bona fide illness, disease or injury.

5. Who is considered a family member under the sick leave ordinance?

Family member includes spouse, child or step-child, and parent or step-parent of the employee.

Child means a biological, adopted, foster, or step child, a legal ward, or a child of a person standing in loco parentis (acts in the place of the parent and has day-to-day responsibility to care for or financially support a child), who is under eighteen years of age; or who is eighteen years of age or older and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability.

Parent means a biological, adoptive, foster parent, or step parent, or any other individual who stood in loco parentis to the employee when the employee was a child. Parent does not include parent "in law".

Employees will be expected to affirm that the family member for whom they use sick leave qualifies as a family member for sick leave purposes. Employees should complete this form, available at <http://www.houstontx.gov/hr/email/images/Sick%20Leave%20Form%20PDF%20Fillable%20Saveable%209-13-2013.pdf>, to be provided to their supervisor and maintained in the department's personnel folder.

6. Can I use my sick leave for doctor appointments?

You can use your sick leave for any of your own doctor appointments.

When using sick leave to care for a family member, you can use it to take your family member to a doctor appointment directly related to the immediate care of his/her illness, disease or injury. Sick leave can not be used for a family member's wellness appointment, such as annual check-up, dental cleaning, etc.

7. Can I use sick leave under Family Medical Leave to care for a family member?

Yes, Administrative Procedure 3-2 for Family Medical Leave has been revised to allow this. Also, you can use sick leave to care for a family member's bona fide illness, disease or injury even if not covered by Family Medical Leave.

8. We are currently required to provide documentation when we use 64 hours of sick leave in a benefit year. Does this still apply?

Yes. Employees are still responsible for managing their own absences from work as well as complying with City and departmental attendance policies. The only change of this ordinance is to allow sick leave to be used for family members. All other attendance rules, whether City or departmental, still apply.

9. If using sick time for a family member, will I be required to bring a doctor's statement?

At the department's discretion, you may be asked to bring a doctor's statement for your family member's care. This request will follow the same reasoning as when you used sick leave for your own care, such as three consecutive days of sick leave, over 64 hours sick leave used in a benefit year, suspicion of abuse, etc.

10. Have any changes been made to earning personal leave hours?

There is no change to how you earn personal leave hours. It is still based on the number of sick leave hours you use, whether you use them for yourself or a family member.

11. Will sick hours under the Donated Leave Program be allowed for family members?

Under the City's Donated Leave Program, employees can donate vacation time for an ill or injured employee to use as sick leave. The Donated Leave Program is only for an employee's bona fide illness, disease or off duty injury. Donated leave hours can not be used for absence due to a family member's illness.