City of Winder Personnel Policy Manual
Title: Critical Illness
Date Issued: 9/2026
Policy: 066

Mayor

City Administrator

66.10 Purpose

This policy provides eligible employees with the ability to take additional leave beyond standard PTO leave when they are unable to work due to a prolonged or catastrophic illness, injury, or disease. The City recognizes that employees may face a personal or family critical illness that requires an extended absence from work beyond what their accrued paid time off (PTO) can cover.

66.11 Eligibility

A. To be eligible for leave under this policy, an employee must:

1. Be a full-time City employee who has completed the applicable probationary period;
2. Have exhausted all accrued paid time off (PTO, sick, and any other applicable paid leave banks) as of the date Critical Illness leave begins;
3. Provide medical documentation, as described in **Section 66.15,** supporting the need for leave; and
4. Submit a completed leave request in accordance with **Section 66.16**
5. Employees may not request critical illness leave for injuries due to an on-the-job injury covered by workers' compensation.

B. "Family member" for purposes of this policy means a spouse, child, parent, or other dependent for whom the employee has documented care responsibility.

C. Examples of critical illness are illness that requires surgery, specialized care, heart attacks, strokes, traumatic injuries, cancer treatment, severe infections, respiratory failure, burns, or other hospitalizations.

66.12 Leave Benefit

Eligible employees who have exhausted their PTO and other available leave due to a qualifying critical illness (their own or for an eligible family member) may receive up to six (6) paid consecutive weeks (maximum of 30 paid working days). All pay will be at the employee's regular rate.

66.13 Duration

The maximum benefit under this policy is six (6) paid consecutive weeks per qualifying event, per rolling 12-month period. Requests for leave beyond six (6) weeks will be evaluated as unpaid personal leave in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws, in accordance with FMLA.

66.14 Relationship with Other Leave Programs

A. FMLA: Critical Illness Leave runs concurrently with any leave the employee is eligible for under the FMLA. The City complies with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities.

B. PTO Accrual: PTO does not accrue during any unpaid portion of Leave, consistent with the City's standard leave-accrual policy.

66.15 Physician's Certificate

A. To support an employee's request and ensure compliance with applicable leave and accommodation requirements, the City must obtain a signed Physician's Certificate. A completed medical certification form from a licensed health care provider confirming the critical illness and the expected duration of leave needed;

B. Recertification if the leave extends beyond the period originally certified; and

C. A return to work, when the leave relates to the employee's own illness.

D. The City will keep all medical information confidential and maintain it in a file separate from the employee's general personnel file, in accordance with applicable law.

66.16 Requesting Leave

A. Notify their supervisor and Human Resources as soon as possible, and provide 10 days' advance notice when the need for leave is foreseeable;

B. Submit a written leave request, along with any required medical certification, to Human Resources;

C. Confirm that all applicable PTO has been or will be exhausted prior to the start of Critical Illness Leave; and

D. In cases of a medical emergency, notice should be provided by the employee or a family representative as soon as reasonably practicable.

66.17 Benefits

All City benefits and insurance remain in full effect while approved to receive critical illness leave. Health insurance premiums and other benefit premiums will continue to be deducted if pay is received by the employee. Medical and other group insurance benefits normally lapse at the end of the month following the commencement of a leave of absence without pay. Major medical, dental, and life insurance may be continued for one month while on leave without pay, provided a statement is completed and signed prior to leaving, and by the employee paying their portion of the cost of the coverage one month in advance and by the 5th of the month thereafter. Late payment will result in the termination of major medical, dental, and life benefits.