



Human Resources Committee

Mike Harris, Chairman
James Carius Community Room
Wednesday, January 28, 2026
During County Board Meeting

- I. Roll Call
- II. New Business
 - HR-26-01 A. Recommend to Approve a Change to the Extended Leave Policy
- III. Reports and Communications
- IV. Recess

Members: Chairman Mike Harris, Max Schneider, Joe Woodrow, Deene Milam, Eric Schmidgall, Kim Joesting, Russ Crawford, Dave Mingus, Nancy Proehl, Eric Stahl, Aaron Phillips

COMMITTEE REPORT

HR-26-01

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Tazewell County Board:

Your Human Resources Committee has considered the following RESOLUTION and recommends that it be adopted by the Board:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the County's Human Resources Committee recommends the replacement of Section 9.13 of Tazewell County's Employees' Personnel Policies Handbook titled "Extended Leave of Absence Without Pay" with the revised version of said policy as attached to this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the new version of Section 9.13 titled "Extended Leave of Absence With or Without Pay" more fully reflects the procedures, requirements, benefits and limitations of extended leaves of absences as offered by Tazewell County as employer.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the County Board approves the recommendation to replace Section 9.13 of Tazewell County's Employees' Personnel Policies Handbook.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Clerk notifies the County Board Office, the Human Resources Department and Payroll of this action in order that this resolution be fully implemented.

PASSED THIS 28th DAY OF January, 2026.

ATTEST:

County Clerk

County Board Chairman

9.13 EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITH OR WITHOUT PAY

Purpose

This policy governs the procedures and requirements for extended leave of absence with or without pay for County employees. It applies to leaves for health, educational, personal, or military reserve purposes, and incorporates federal and state legal requirements, including the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and COBRA continuation coverage.

Eligibility and Approval

Extended leaves of absence may be granted solely by the managing Elected Official or Appointed Department Head who must immediately notify the County Administrator, Human Resources, and Payroll Department upon approval. All requests must be made in writing and, when foreseeable, submitted at least thirty (30) days in advance; when not foreseeable, requests must be made as soon as practicable.

Types of Extended Leave

- **Health Leave:** Employees with at least six (6) months of service may request extended health leave after exhausting all applicable accrued leave and FMLA entitlements. A written statement from a licensed physician is required to substantiate the need for leave. The length of leave will be determined by the Elected Official or Appointed Department Head, considering the physician's recommendation. Employees must provide a written release from their physician before returning to work.
- **Educational Leave:** Employees with at least one (1) year of service may be granted educational leave when the program is mutually beneficial to the County and the employee. The length of leave will be set according to the program type. Contact Human Resources for information on the impact on seniority and benefits.
- **Personal Leave:** Employees with at least six (6) months of service may request personal leave. The Elected or Appointed Official will evaluate requests based on the purpose, duration, departmental impact, and the employee's prior performance.
- **Military Reserve Leave:** Refer to Section 9.14 of the Employees' Personnel Policies Handbook for details.
- **Workers' Compensation Leave:** Leave shall be granted in accordance with applicable state regulations for employees injured in the course of employment (see Section 9.5 of the Employees' Personnel Policies Handbook).

FMLA Eligibility and Procedure

FMLA leave is available to eligible employees as defined by federal law (generally, those with at least twelve (12) months of service and 1,250 hours worked in the preceding 12 months). County policy requires employees to use all available paid leave (vacation, sick leave, personal, compensation time, etc.) concurrently with FMLA leave. Once all paid leave is exhausted, any remaining FMLA leave will be unpaid. When FMLA leave is requested, the employer will notify the employee of any required medical certifications. During paid FMLA leave, the employee is responsible for the employee's share of health, dental, and vision insurance premiums, which will be deducted from their bi-weekly paycheck. If the employee is unpaid during FMLA leave, arrangements must be made with Payroll to pay premiums directly.

ADA and Non-FMLA Extended Health Leave

If an employee is ineligible for FMLA, they should first consult Human Resources regarding accrued paid time off, other employer-provided leave, and state-specific provisions. If a leave of absence is needed due to a disability, the County will engage in an interactive process under the ADA to determine reasonable accommodation, which may include leave or modified duties. A written physician's statement is required for health leave. The employee must exhaust all accrued benefit time before beginning an unpaid leave of absence.

Health Insurance During Workers' Compensation (WC) Leave

If the employee is eligible for FMLA or state medical leave, health insurance coverage continues under the same terms as before the leave, including premium cost sharing. Employers cannot increase the employee's portion of the premium during FMLA leave.

If the employee is not eligible for FMLA and the Worker's Compensation leave results in zero hours worked, this triggers a COBRA qualifying event (reduction of hours), and COBRA coverage must be offered.

After FMLA or another protected leave ends, if the employee cannot return to work and loses eligibility due to reduced hours, COBRA must be offered.

Illinois Public Employee Disability Act (PEDA) Leave

If a policy allows extended coverage—such as PEDa, which permits up to 52 weeks of protected leave in certain circumstances—that will take precedence over the benefit extension timeframes outlined in Section 9.13. The policy must be provided to the insurance carrier upon request to confirm any applicable extension.

Maximum Duration of Extended Leave

The maximum length of any extended leave of absence, regardless of type, is eighteen (18) months. This period begins the day after all FMLA entitlements and accrued paid leave have been exhausted. An employee may apply for extended leave of absence with or without pay once per year, calculated from the start date of the most recent leave.

Insurance Coverage During Extended Leave

Once an employee exhausts all accrued benefit time and/or FMLA entitlement and enters an unpaid extended leave, they will be offered continuation of health, dental, and vision insurance coverage under COBRA. The employee is responsible for the full premium cost. COBRA coverage is available for up to eighteen (18) months, or longer if allowed by applicable law, from the start of the extended leave. If the employee fails to pay required premiums as prescribed by law, all health, dental, and vision insurance coverage will be terminated without reinstatement until the employee returns to active employment. If after the maximum allowed extended leave of eighteen (18) months, or longer if allowed by applicable law, the employee does not return to work, employment with the County will be terminated and COBRA coverage will end.

Return from Extended Leave

Employees must provide reasonable notice—at least two (2) weeks prior to their intended return date—to the managing Elected or Appointed Official. Upon receipt of notification, the Official

may arrange for reinstatement to the previous position if available. If the previous position is no longer available, the employee may be considered for other open positions for which they are qualified. If no suitable position exists, the obligation to reinstate ends and the employee's status will be changed to voluntary termination.

Reemployment and Benefit Reinstatement

If an employee's employment is terminated following the expiration of the maximum allowed extended leave, any future employment will be as a new hire. Only legally required benefits, if any, will be reinstated as required by law. The County is not obligated to reinstate any benefits beyond those required by law.

Supplemental Employment Prohibition

Employees on any type of extended leave of absence under this policy are prohibited from engaging in outside or supplemental employment. Violation of this provision may result in termination of employment.

Benefit Accrual During Leave

Accrual of benefits such as vacation, personal time, and sick time will be suspended during any unpaid portion of extended leave and will resume upon the employee's return to active employment.

Group Life Insurance Policy-Symetra

Eligibility and Continuation of Coverage

- Coverage is contingent upon active employment.
- Coverage may continue during approved leaves, such as FMLA, PEDA or military leave, for the period required by law and while premiums are paid.

Extended Leave

- For extended leaves (e.g., medical, personal, or educational), coverage generally ends when the protected leave period expires.

Conversion and Portability Options

- When coverage ends, employees may have the option to convert or port their life insurance.

These options must be elected within the designated timeframe. Contact the Human Resource Department.

Temporary Staffing During Leave

Department Heads may temporarily fill positions vacated due to approved extended leave if sufficient funds are available in the appropriate budget line item.

9.13 EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY

Leaves of Absence without pay may be granted for health, educational, personal, or military reserve purposes. Leaves of absence may only be granted by the Elected Official or Appointed Department Head, who must immediately notify the County Administrator and the Payroll Department.

Employees must submit a request for leave of absence at least 30 days in advance, whenever the need for leave is foreseeable. If the need for leave is not foreseeable, employees must request leave as soon in advance as practicable.

Personal leave is unpaid. However, County policy requires employees to first use their available paid time off (vacation, sick leave, compensation time, etc., if applicable) during the FMLA leave period.

When an employee has taken all available accrued paid leave, any additional leave under the policy will be unpaid. Employees on leave of absence under this policy are prohibited from engaging in outside or supplemental employment.

Benefit accruals for full-time employees on leave, such as vacation and sick time, will be suspended during any unpaid portion of leave under this policy and will resume upon return to active employment. The employee may continue with the employer's health and life insurance coverage at the employee's cost without an employer contribution.

An employee on leave must, whenever possible, provide his or her supervisor with at least two (2) weeks' advance notice of the date he or she intends to return to work.

When a leave ends, the employee will normally be reinstated to the same position, if it is available, or to a similar position for which the employee is qualified. However, approval leave does not guarantee reinstatement in all cases. If another position is not found for the employee within 30 days from the date the leave expires, the employee's employment will be terminated. Department Heads may fill a position that is vacant due to an employee being on an approved Leave of Absence, with a temporary employee if sufficient funds are budgeted in the appropriate temporary line item.

If any employee fails to report to work promptly at the end of the approved leave, the employee is considered to have voluntarily resigned unless otherwise protected by applicable law (Eligibility and other requirements and limitations do not apply to an employee's request for reasonable accommodation under the ADA).

The following types of leaves may be granted:

Workers' Compensation: A leave of absence conforming to applicable state regulations shall be granted by the Elected Official or Appointed Department Head to employees who have been injured while performing their work assignment for the County.

Medical Leave: A health leave may be granted by the Elected Official or Appointed Department Head to employees with six (6) months of service or more. The employee must present a written

statement from a licensed physician to their Elected Official or Appointed Department Head, stating the need for such a leave. The length of the leave will be determined by the Elected Official or Appointed Department Head, giving consideration to the physician's recommendation. Employees returning to work from a health leave must present a written release from their physician. When the employee requests Family and Medical Leave Act leave, the Employer will notify the employee of any requisite medical certifications at the time the FMLA commences.

Education Leave: An educational leave may be granted by the Elected Official or Appointed Department Head to employees with one (1) year of service when the education program is of mutual benefit to both the County and the employee. The length of leave will be determined in accordance with the type of program attended (educational leave should not be confused with education benefits). The Human Resources Department should be contacted regarding how seniority, health insurance, vacation, and other benefits are affected during and after the leave of absence. While educational leaves are expected to enhance employee's performance and professional abilities, the County cannot guarantee that participation in formal education will entitle the employee to automatic advancement, a different job assignment, or pay increase.