This guide is designed for birth mothers who would like to take a leave of absence for the birth of their child. In this guide, you will find information to help you understand the leave entitlement and paid time off options that may apply to your time away from work. The guide also be used as a tool to help plan the important steps you will need to take before, during and after your leave. A helpful leave checklist is also available at the end of this guide.

**TAKING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM WORK**

Eligible employees may request a leave of absence under FMLA. Please review important policy information about FMLA leave, including eligibility and entitlements as well as employee rights and responsibilities.

**PAY DURING FMLA**

FMLA does not provide pay but there may be paid benefits and time off options that can run concurrently with FMLA. Eligibility for these benefits will vary depending on your employee classification and years of benefits eligible service. Below you will find an outline of benefits that may apply to your maternity leave.

**PAID PARENTAL LEAVE (PPL)**

After two years of benefits eligible service, full-time staff are eligible for paid parental leave (PPL).

- PPL covers up to 6 weeks immediately following the birth of a child.
- PPL is paid through Payroll Services and considered paid status for annual and sick time accruals.

Employees must meet eligibility criteria for paid parental leave at the time of the birth or placement of a child. More information about paid parental leave can be found in the Time Off and Leave Guide.

**GW PAID SHORT-TERM DISABILITY (GW PAID STD)**

After two years of benefits eligible service, full-time staff are eligible for GW Paid STD for qualifying medical leaves. This includes birth mothers who are taking leave immediately following the birth of their child.

- Staff with 2-5 years of service can receive 50% benefits-eligible salary replacement.
- Staff with 5 or more years of service can receive 100% benefits-eligible salary replacement.

GW Paid STD is normally approved for 6 weeks for vaginal delivery and 8 weeks for caesarean, including a 14 day benefit elimination period, barring any medical complications. GW Paid STD is paid through Payroll Services and considered paid status for annual and sick time accruals.

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**Why should I apply for FMLA for my maternity leave?**

FMLA allows you to take time away from work to recover following the birth and to bond with your baby. FMLA does not provide pay but while on approved FMLA leave, your job is protected.

**What should I do if I am not eligible for FMLA?**

You may request unpaid job-protected leave as an accommodation under the DC Protecting Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PPWFA). Requests for continuous or intermittent leave under the PPWFA are processed through GW’s leave administrator, Lincoln Financial.

If additional leave is needed once approved PPWFA leave concludes, a personal leave can be requested through your manager. More information about personal leave can be found on the Benefits website.
VOLUNTARY SHORT-TERM DISABILITY (VSTD)
Staff with less than two years of benefits eligible service can elect the employee-paid VSTD program at time of hire or during annual open enrollment. VSTD would apply to a qualifying medical leave, including birth mothers who are taking leave immediately following the birth of their child. You must already be enrolled in the VSTD benefits at the time of birth in order to be eligible for the VSTD benefit during your maternity leave.

VSTD is normally approved for 6 weeks for vaginal delivery and 8 weeks for caesarean, including a 14 day benefit elimination period, barring any medical complications. Please note that VSTD benefits are paid by the university’s disability carrier, Lincoln Financial, and are not considered paid status for annual and sick time accruals.

ANNUAL, SICK AND UNPAID TIME
You can elect to use available annual and sick time during FMLA leave to remain in paid status. Employees can also elect to take FMLA unpaid.

ACTION NEEDED:
- If you wish to use annual, sick or unpaid time during your FMLA leave, please submit those requests to your manager as normal for payroll processing. You, with the help of your manager, are responsible for managing your paid and unpaid time off requests. Instructions for submitting paid and unpaid time off can be found on the Benefits website.
- Notify Benefits if you will be going into an unpaid status and the first unpaid date so applicable benefits continuation information can be provided.
- If you are an exempt employee, you will also need to notify Payroll of any unpaid time taken.

*Please note, if you are eligible for GW Paid Parental Leave and/or GW Paid Short-Term Disability, GW Benefits will process payroll for you during the approved period. You should begin submitting all annual, sick and unpaid time requests to your manager once GW paid STD and GW PPL benefits end.

PPL and GW Paid STD Benefit Coordination
- PPL and GW Paid STD benefits run concurrently when eligible for both benefits.
- PPL can cover up to 6 weeks of continuous leave immediately following the birth of a child.
- GW paid STD benefits can be approved for 6 weeks for a vaginal delivery, 8 weeks for a C-section.
- Your pay would be covered for the first 6 weeks of your leave through a combination of the GW Paid STD and PPL benefits. If you have a C-section, an additional 2 weeks of GW Paid STD can be approved.

COORDINATION WITH STATE AND LOCAL PAID BENEFITS
When an employee is eligible for disability or paid family leave benefits under state or local programs (e.g., DC Paid Family Leave), the benefit is considered deductible income under GW’s STD and paid parental leave programs. This means the amount eligible for under the state and local programs will be subtracted from GW paid benefit payments. For more information on state and local programs, please review the Benefits website.

BENEFITS CONTINUATION
Carefully review important benefits continuation information on the Benefits website. Failure to review this information may have negative impact on benefits coverage.

COMMUNICATE
- Provide Benefits with your preferred email address and phone number. Otherwise, all benefits communications will be sent to your GW email address.

1 VSTD enrollments after initial eligibility require Evidence of Insurability (EOI).
• Notify your manager of your leave and your expected return to work date, if known.

**MAKING CHANGES TO YOUR BENEFITS**

The birth of your child is a qualified life event that allows you to make certain changes to your benefits. If adding your child to your benefits coverage, update your benefits in the **benefits enrollment system** and provide supporting proof of birth within 60 days of the birth.

*Important: Due to IRS regulations, FSA dependent care accounts cannot be continued or newly elected while on paid or unpaid leave longer than 30 days. You can enroll/re-enroll in the FSA dependent care benefit within 30 calendar days after your return from leave.*

**RETURNING TO WORK**

• Review the Benefits website for information on returning to work including benefits re-enrollment guidelines.
• Confirm your return to work date with your manager and Benefits. Failure to notify Benefits of your return to work may negatively affect payroll and benefits processing.

**HOW TO APPLY FOR PARENTAL LEAVE**

• Review the **application instructions** and contact Lincoln Financial to apply at least 30 days prior to your estimated due date.
• Once you apply:
  o If you have STD coverage, you will be assigned a Lincoln Financial claims manager (within 2-3 business days) to assist you through the FMLA/STD coordinated process. Please review all notices that Lincoln sends to you carefully as they will include important information about your benefits and outline your responsibilities in the disability process.
  o If you are eligible for FMLA but no other paid benefits (e.g., VSTD, GW Paid STD, PPL), Lincoln Financial will assign you a leave specialist and send you a leave packet including a required medical certification form due back to Lincoln within 15 days of the start of your leave. (If not received, check your spam email folder.)
CHECKLIST OF IMPORTANT ACTION ITEMS

BEFORE YOUR LEAVE BEGINS

➢ Review Policy, Understand Your Benefits and Apply

☐ Review the [FMLA leave](#) and [paid parental leave](#) policies.
☐ Apply for FMLA (and PPL/STD, if applicable) through Lincoln Financial.
☐ Review eligibility for any state or local paid leave benefits to understand application requirements and important deadlines.
☐ If eligible for STD/PPL and FMLA, return the medical authorization form to your healthcare provider. Your case manager will contact you within 2-3 days of receiving your application. Please note that your claims with Lincoln will remain pending until the birth has taken place.
☐ If only eligible for FMLA, return a completed medical certification to Lincoln Financial within 15 days.
☐ Review important [benefits continuation information](#) on the Benefits website.

➢ Communicate with GW Benefits and Your Manager

☐ Contact Benefits if you have questions about paid time off or leave.
☐ Provide Benefits with your unpaid dates, if applicable. Exempt employees should notify Payroll of all unpaid dates as well.
☐ Provide Benefits with your preferred email address and phone number.
☐ Notify your manager of your upcoming leave.

DURING YOUR LEAVE

☐ Notify your Lincoln case manager that the birth has occurred so that they can process your pending claims.
☐ Apply for any state or local paid leave benefits you are eligible for.
☐ Update your benefits in the benefits enrollment system and provide supporting proof of birth to Benefits within 60 calendar days of the birth.
☐ If taking unpaid leave and cancelling benefits, submit your cancellation in the benefits enrollment system.
☐ If taking unpaid leave and continuing benefits, remit payment for your premiums.

RETURNING TO WORK

☐ Confirm your return to work date with your manager and Benefits.
☐ Review the [returning to work information](#) on the Benefits website.
☐ If applicable, enroll/re-enroll in the FSA dependent care account within 30 calendar days after your return date.

NEED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE?
For questions regarding paid time off and leave programs, please contact Benefits at:
Email: timeoff@gwu.edu | Phone: (571) 553-8382 | Online: hr.gwu.edu/time-and-leave

ADDITIONAL BENEFIT RESOURCES

- GW provides benefits-eligible faculty and staff access to family care resources including in-home care for children or adults, in-center back-up care and elder care through Bright Horizons.
- GW’s [Employee Assistance Program](#) is available at no cost to you and your family and can help support a wide range of life events, including work-life solutions and confidential counseling.
• Pregnant employees (or dependents) covered under a GW health plan are eligible to participate in the UHC Maternity Support Program at no cost which includes access to 24-hour toll-free call support from experienced nurses, educational materials, and more.
• Employees enrolled in GW’s group life insurance are eligible for the LifeKeys® program which provides access to a wide array of services including estate planning, identity theft resources and beneficiary support.
• GW’s Health Advocate program is an independent healthcare advocacy company that offers personalized, expert help to navigate healthcare systems to save time and money.
• Additional well-being programs can be found on the Benefits website.