



MEDICAL LEAVE GUIDE AND CHECKLIST

Eligible employees can request FMLA leave if requiring medical leave due to a serious health condition. This guide is designed to assist you through each step of your medical leave. A helpful leave checklist is also available at the end of this guide.

TAKING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM WORK

Please review important policy information about [FMLA leave](#), including eligibility and entitlements as well as employee rights and responsibilities.

Why should I apply for FMLA for my medical leave?

FMLA allows you to take time away from work when you are unable to work due to a serious health condition. 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 or have exhausted my FMLA entitlement?

You may request unpaid job-protected leave as an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). GW'S [Office of EEO and Access](#) administers this program and can be reached at (202) 994-9656 or accommodations@gwu.edu.

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 medical leave.

GW PAID SHORT-TERM DISABILITY (GW PAID STD)

After two years of benefits-eligible service, full-time faculty and staff are eligible for GW Paid STD for qualifying medical leaves.

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

GW Paid STD benefits can be paid for up to 166 calendar days, after 14 calendar days of disability. This benefit is paid through Payroll Services therefore considered paid status for annual and sick time accruals.

Please note: Occupational injuries and illnesses are not compensable under GW's STD plans.

VOLUNTARY SHORT-TERM DISABILITY (VSTD)

Full-time faculty and staff with less than two years of benefits eligible service as well as medical residents and part-time faculty and staff can elect the employee-paid VSTD program at time of hire or during annual open enrollment¹. VSTD benefits are paid by the university's disability carrier, Lincoln Financial, and are not considered paid status for annual and sick time accruals.

¹ VSTD enrollments after initial eligibility require Evidence of Insurability (EOI).

Medical Documentation Requirements under Short-Term Disability:

Medical documentation must show proof of disability and appropriate treatment by a health care provider. If you have questions about what medical documentation is required for your disability claim, please contact your Lincoln Financial claims manager.

ANNUAL, SICK AND UNPAID TIME

Available annual and sick time can be used:

- to supplement VSTD or 50% GW paid STD,
- to cover the 14 day GW Paid STD elimination period, or
- to provide pay when an employee is not eligible for GW Paid STD²

Provide Benefits with a breakdown of the paid and unpaid time off that you would like to use while your GW Paid STD claim is pending or if you are not eligible for GW Paid STD.

Please note that employees cannot use annual or sick time while also approved for workers' compensation. If approved for workers' compensation, employees are in an unpaid status through GW payroll.

LONG-TERM DISABILITY (LTD)

[LTD benefits](#) may apply for medical leaves exceeding 180 days (the LTD benefit waiting period).

LTD benefits can be normally be paid through the social security retirement age, provided the disability continues, with some exclusions and limited benefit periods.

COORDINATION WITH STATE AND LOCAL PAID BENEFITS

When an employee is eligible for disability or paid family leave benefits under state or local programs (i.e., [DC Paid Family Leave](#)), the benefit is considered deductible income under GW's STD programs. This means the amount eligible for under the state and local programs will be **subtracted** from GW paid benefits payments. For more information on state and local programs, please review the [Benefits website](#).

WORK-RELATED ILLNESS OR INJURY

Employees who have an injury or illness³ that arises out of and in the course of their employment may be entitled to workers' compensation benefits. Employees must report all on-the-job accidents and injuries and complete the required incident reporting steps required by the [Office of Risk Management](#).

Any absence approved under workers' compensation will run concurrently with FMLA and/or ADA leave, as applicable.

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 or phone number. Otherwise, all benefits communications will be sent to your GW email address.
- Notify your manager of your leave and your expected return to work date, if known.

RETURNING TO WORK

- Review the Benefits website for information on [returning to work](#) including benefits re-enrollment guidelines.

² Any sick time used during approved VSTD benefit periods will reduce VSTD benefit payments.

³ Disabilities due to occupational injuries or illnesses are not covered under the university's short-term disability plans. Review details on the [Benefits website](#).

- Confirm your return to work date with your manager and Benefits. Failure to notify Benefits of your impending return to work may negatively affect payroll and benefits processing.
- Submit a [return to work authorization form](#) to Benefits prior to reinstatement. If authorization is not received, your return to work may be delayed until authorization is provided.

IMPORTANT: If your healthcare provider has authorized you to return to work **with restrictions**, please contact the [Office of Equal Employment Opportunity & Access](#) before returning to work so they can review your restrictions for an accommodation prior to your reinstatement.

HOW TO APPLY

- Review the [application instructions](#) on reporting your claim and leave and contact Lincoln Financial to apply:
 - At least 30 days prior to your expected leave begin date, if your leave was foreseeable, or
 - If your leave begin date was not foreseeable, within 2 days of going on medical leave.

NOTE: If you need assistance with applying, please contact GW Benefits.

- Once you apply:
 - 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.
 - If you are only eligible for FMLA, 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. (If not received, check your spam email folder.)

NEED ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR DISABILITY CLAIM?

[GW's Health Advocate program](#) is the nation's leading independent healthcare advocacy and assistance company. As a special benefit paid for by GW, and in addition to assisting with choosing insurance plans and untangling medical bills, Health Advocate can:

- Assist you in understanding what clinical information is required for your disability claim,
- Help forward your medical records and other required documentation to the disability carrier, and
- Assist you in understanding what is required to appeal a denied disability claim.

CHECKLIST OF IMPORTANT ACTION ITEMS

BEFORE YOUR LEAVE BEGINS

➤ Review Policy, Understand Your Benefits and Apply

- Review the [FMLA leave policy](#).
- Apply for FMLA (and 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 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 your medical leave begins.
- 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 a breakdown of your paid and unpaid time off plans, if applicable.
- 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 once your medical leave has begun so that they can process your pending STD claim, if eligible for STD.
- Apply for any state or local paid leave benefits you are eligible for.
- 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 your return to work authorization includes restrictions, please contact the EEO and Access office before returning to work to discuss an accommodation.

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'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.
- 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](#).