

B&F Gradual Return To Work Policy Supervisor Guide



Background

This project to implement a Gradual Return to Work policy in Business and Finance came about because of a formal request that Carol Hollenshead and the CEW staff made directly to EVPCFO Tim Slottow in the Fall, 2006. Tim was very supportive and charged the BFHR team move forward, discuss options and bring a proposal forward EVPCFO Senior Staff. In March, 2007, the BFHR team began meeting with Jennie McAlpine from the Work Life Resources Center (WLRC) and Beth Sullivan from CEW to draft a policy for B&F based on the policy in use by AVPF. The goal was to create a policy that we can implement across B&F which will also serve as a demonstration project for the eventual adoption of a University wide policy. Senior Staff approved the policy in December 2007, for a January 1, 2008 Business and Finance-wide implementation.

It was estimated that a gradual return to work request was approved for 15 parents across Business and Finance during 2005 and 2006. The only B&F unit that had a formal gradual return to work policy ("Reduced Appointment Following Birth or Adoption) in place was AVPF.

B&F Gradual Return to Work Policy Highlights (see attached policy for details)

- Available for use by parents of both sexes.
- Applies to birth or adoptive parents
- Permits flexible use of vacation time, sick time, family leave and reduced appointment for six months following medical release to work, birth or homecoming
- Presumes permission is granted unless a compelling reason is given for denial
- Decisions made on a case-by-case basis by supervisor with approval by upper management
- Metrics gathered and evaluated on request, response, use and impact for 3 years

Current Related Policies

Basic Federal Law Regarding Leave of Absence following Birth or Adoption

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) guarantees the right of employees who work for employers of 50 or more to take up to twelve weeks leave for qualified events. For a tutorial on FMLA, please see URL <http://www.hr.umich.edu/hra/FMLA/> or consult your Unit HR person.

University Options for Paid Leave after Birth or Adoption

The University of Michigan has paid leave policies for faculty and staff which can provide pay for a portion of this time off. Paid leave options vary depending on employment status and whether the new parent is a birth mother, father or adoptive parent.

1. Birth mothers who have been employed at the University for at least two years are eligible for extended sick leave. Leave time is based upon the health issues of the mother as determined by her doctor and is generally granted for 6-8 weeks unless doctor's orders extend this period. This type of leave is paid via extended sick time benefits.
2. Staff birth mothers with less than two years of employment can use short term sick leave and/or vacation (PTO for Health System employees).
3. Employees of the University who are partners of the birth mother can use short term sick leave and/or vacation.
4. For adoptive parents, the only paid option available at this time is to use accrued vacation time (PTO for Health System employees).

B&F Gradual Return To Work Policy Supervisor Guide



Benefits of the Policy

Work-life balance and quality of life policies and activities are recognized strategies that support the B&F goal of Employer of Choice for High Performing Individuals and Teams. The use of flexible scheduling, including Gradual Return to Work after birth/adoption, has been shown through a rich body of research to benefit organizations, managers and employees in multiple ways:

1. Enhances ability to recruit skilled employees
2. Enhances retention; decreases turnover costs
3. Reduces absenteeism
4. Reduces stress and corresponding health care costs
5. Increases profit (effectiveness) through engagement, productivity and loyalty

"I needed the assurance prior to going on medical leave that I could have a flexible schedule for my return to work. My proposal was accepted and worked very well for both the office and my family. The modified schedule was not dramatic, a 6.5 hour day for two months and then 7.5 hour day for another month, but nonetheless very helpful during an emotional and sleep deprived time...."

Knowing I am a valuable asset to the University only endears me to it further. I am very dedicated and love my job; knowing the University is willing to support my family stewardship only helps me invest more of myself in being a better steward of the University.

Excerpted from PACWI report September 2006.

This policy also supports the B&F value of Health and Safety as this is a health benefit activity, both for the parents and the infants. (Health risks of babies under 3 months cared for out of the home are higher.) As the health and wellness of our work force gains priority as part of our business plan to contain spiraling health costs, the increased use of Gradual Return to Work for new parents has multiple benefits. In addition, medical research is finding that longer maternity leaves are beneficial for both infant and parent health, resulting in:

1. Lower stress for parent and child
2. Stronger family relationships
3. Increased ability to care for health issues
4. Decreased spread of infections at home and at work due to reduced out-of-home child care
5. Decreased economic strain due to lower child care costs
6. Better response to the inadequate supply of infant care in community which makes finding suitable care difficult

The President's Advisory Committee on Women's Issues documented for UM senior leadership how flexible scheduling, including Gradual Return to Work after birth or adoption, can benefit the University's mission to recruit and retain skilled staff. Their study notes that Gradual Return to Work policies are offered by the following peer institutions.

- ◆ Borders Group
- ◆ Ford World Headquarters
- ◆ Eastern Michigan University
- ◆ Oakland Community College
- ◆ University of California - Berkeley
- ◆ University of Illinois
- ◆ University of Minnesota - Twin Cities
- ◆ Northwestern University
- ◆ Ohio State University
- ◆ University of Washington- Seattle
- ◆ University of Wisconsin – Madison

B&F Gradual Return To Work Policy Supervisor Guide



Note to Supervisors

We are asking supervisors to do everything within reason to support staff members requesting the use of the Gradual Return to Work policy. As these situations are often complicated, it's important to consult with your unit HR person on all of the details. It's also important to explain all of the options and ramifications to any employee who is considering the use of this policy. To understand additional implications of this policy on the employee's benefits, you may wish to consult the Benefits' website:

<http://www.umich.edu/~benefits/events/leaves.htm>

Case Examples

Example 1 – Birth mother's use of vacation, unpaid childcare leave and reduced effort following the medical leave required after the birth of her child.

An employee wishes to use medical leave, vacation, unpaid child care leave and then return to work with reduced effort (supplementing with vacation to maintain a full appointment) following the birth of her child. Prior to the birth, the employee submits to her supervisor a **Request for Leave of Absence Form 36609**, for six weeks' unpaid childcare leave of absence following the birth of her baby. (SPG 201.30) This paperwork is routed through the appropriate reviewing authority for approval and forwarded to the Unit HR Office for handling.

The employee receives a form letter from Staff HR advising her that her leave request is approved. The employee also submits a written request utilizing the form **B&F Request for Gradual Return to Work Following Childbirth** to her immediate supervisor to use vacation time before her unpaid childcare leave and then to reduce her effort for a period upon her return.

This request is reviewed by the supervisor and the appropriate manager and forwarded to the appropriate approving authority with recommendation for approval. Final approval is received from the approving authority and a signed copy of the form indicating the final decision is returned to the employee within one week of the form's submission to the Supervisor. (At the same time, a copy is given to the Unit HR office.)

The employee is medically released to return to work and has a balance of 20 days of vacation time accrued to use. The six month period of eligibility for gradual return to work begins when the medical leave ends.

-----12 week FMLA period-----

BIRTH	Period of Medical Leave (6 weeks)	Use of 10 days Accrued Vacation	Use of Unpaid Childcare Leave (6 wks)	Gradual Return to Work using Vacation
	Six Month Period Following Medical Release to Return to Work			

Example 2 – A birth mother with less than two years of employment's use of short term sick days, vacation and gradual return to work following the birth of her child.

An employee wishes to use her short term sick and accrued vacation time and then return to work with a reduced appointment following the birth of her child. Prior to the birth, the employee submits a written request utilizing the form **B&F Request for Gradual Return to Work Following Childbirth** to her immediate supervisor for a reduced appointment to begin following her return to work from her use of sick time and vacation.

This request is reviewed by the supervisor and the appropriate manager and forwarded to the appropriate approving authority with recommendation for approval. Final approval is received from the approving authority and a signed copy of the form indicating the final decision is returned to the employee within one week of the form's submission to the Supervisor. (At the same time, a copy is given to the unit HR office.) The request is approved.

BIRTH	Birth mother uses all short term sick	Birth mother uses all accrued vacation	Birth mother uses 50% appt	Birth Mother utilizes 75% appointment
	Six Month Period Following Medical Release to Return to Work			

B&F Gradual Return To Work Policy Supervisor Guide



Example 3 – Use of vacation, unpaid leave and Gradual Return to Work policy by non-birth parent following a birth

Prior to the birth of a baby, the father or partner who is an employee requests four weeks of unpaid childcare leave to be used after the birth mother becomes medically able to return to work using the **Request for Leave of Absence Form 36609**. The father/partner has also accrued 30 days of vacation. The date of the beginning of the leave will depend on the date of the actual birth of the baby. The employee also requests a Gradual Return to Work utilizing the form **B&F Request for Gradual Return to Work**, which would commence immediately following the four weeks of his/her unpaid childcare leave of absence and asks that it be a reduced effort to 50%. All requests are approved.

May 15th child is born, mother begins six week medical leave, father/partner works full time
 July 1st mother returns to work and father/partner uses accrued 30 days vacation
 Aug 11st father/partner begins 4 weeks approved unpaid leave of absence
 Sept 11st father/partner begins gradual return to work by working five mornings a week (50%)
 Nov 15st father/partner returns to work full time

-----12 week FMLA period-----

BIRTH	Employee works full time	Employee uses 30 days accrued vac	Employee uses 4 weeks unpaid childcare leave	Employee utilizes 50% reduced appointment
	Six Month Period Following Birth			

Example 4 – Use of vacation, unpaid leave and the Gradual Return to Work policy for adoptive parents

Prior to the homecoming of an adopted child, the adoptive parent who is an employee requests eight weeks of unpaid childcare leave to be used at some point after the homecoming of the child. Prior to the homecoming, the employee submits to their supervisor a **Request for Leave of Absence Form 36609**, for eight weeks' unpaid childcare leave of absence following the adoption of a child. This paperwork is routed through the appropriate reviewing authority for approval and forwarded to the Unit HR Office for handling.

The employee receives a form letter from Staff HR advising them that their leave request is approved. The adoptive parent has also accrued 20 days of vacation. The date of the beginning of the leave depends on the date of the homecoming of the child. Prior to the homecoming, the employee also submits a written request utilizing the form **B&F Request for Gradual Return to Work** to their immediate supervisor for a 60% appointment to begin following their used of vacation and unpaid leave. The request is approved.

-----12 week FMLA period-----

ARRIVAL	Parent is working	Parent uses 20 days accrued vacation	Parent uses 8 weeks unpaid childcare leave	Parent utilizes 60% reduced appointment
	Six Month Period Following Homecoming			