



HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS

Kent M. Edwards, PHR
Director of Human Resources

To: Judge Robert Hebert
Commissioner Richard Morrison
Commissioner Grady Prestage
Commissioner Andy Meyers
Commissioner James Patterson

From: Kathy Novosad

Copy: Kent Edwards
Kaye Reynolds
Roby Tate

Date: June 12, 2009

Subject: Shared Sick Leave Pool
Program Update and Suggested Revisions to Policy

The Fort Bend County Shared Sick Leave Pool was approved by Commissioners Court on July 1, 2008 and has been operational since January 1, 2009. The purpose of this memo is to update the Court on the progress and success of the pool, as well as request approval for changes to the way the pool is administered based on our experience thus far.

The Shared Sick Leave Pool is administered by a committee consisting of a Human Resources representative, Kathy Novosad, and two pool members, Kaye Reynolds and Roby Tate, who were nominated and elected by the pool members. The committee reviews requests for withdrawals and ensures the pool is run according to the policy.

In October 2008 Human Resources communicated the new Shared Sick Leave policy with all employees at the annual benefit open enrollment meetings. The new policy generated a lot of enthusiasm and interest. By January 1, the Pool was "open for business" with 358 members and 3,369 hours of donated sick leave. Nearly six months later, the Pool has 492 members, has distributed a total 1,180 hours of sick leave to members, and has a current balance of 3,783 hours. Employees continue to inquire about the pool, enroll themselves and co-workers, and request hours from the Pool when needed. However, only slightly more than 50% of eligible employees have enrolled in the Pool.



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The Pool has provided ten employees with 1,180 hours of sick leave enabling these employees to maintain some income while contending with a serious health condition. However, a few of these employees needed more leave than the pool could provide. Our policy sets a maximum withdrawal limit as the lesser of: the amount of leave needed, 480 hours, or 5% of the Pool balance. The maximum we have been able to distribute thus far due to the 5% limitation is approximately 180 hours. While any amount of time is beneficial, at least 4 of the employees could have used the maximum 480 hours.

Our goal for the Shared Sick Leave Pool is to maintain a sufficient balance to consistently meet the needs of the members. To help achieve this goal, we are proposing three revisions, detailed below. The administrative committee feels the changes will help build the Pool balance while still ensuring the Pool provides an incentive for employees to conserve their own sick leave and plan ahead for the unexpected.

1. Encourage employees to join the Pool before the need for additional sick leave arises by restricting Pool enrollment to the following three situations:
 - Within one month after attaining the minimum accrual level of 88 hours
 - Each December during an open enrollment period
 - Any time that the administration committee calls for a “donation drive” to increase the balance in the Pool.

Prior to instituting this change, we will run a one-month campaign encouraging all eligible employees to join the Pool before enrollment periods are restricted.
2. Employees who retire or otherwise end employment with the County have the ability to donate up to 80 hours of accrued sick leave to the Pool on or before their last day of employment. We have had success securing this donation from retirees, but it is more challenging to find the opportunity to hold this discussion with employees who quit or are terminated. We recommend instituting an “opt out” provision in the policy to eliminate the need to secure the donation as the employee is leaving. Terminating employees could have added another 2,000 hours to the pool thus far in 2008.
3. Finally, the committee recommends increasing the number of donated hours required to enroll a fellow employee in the Pool. Since January, 133 employees have been enrolled by co-workers with a one-time 8-hour donation. We recommend increasing the required co-worker enrollment donation to 16 hours.

The draft policy as revised is attached for your review. Please contact Kathy Novosad if you have any questions regarding the Shared Sick Leave Pool.