

Catastrophic Fund Donations:

Any accrued annual hours over 240 and any sick hours over 960 are lost if they aren't used by December 31st each year. If you will have hours in excess of the annual limit at the end of the year (see your pay stub for balance of hours or look on MyHenderson), here is your opportunity to donate them to a good cause – the Catastrophic Leave Program. You can donate up to a total of 96 hours of annual time, sick time or a combination of the two. If you are interested in donating time, please complete Part I (excluding position number and personnel number) of the attached donation form, sign, date, and return to Human Resources, Womack 209 or Box 7884.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the Catastrophic Leave Program, it is a pool of accrued sick and annual leave, donated by institutional employees for use by full-time, benefits-eligible, non-faculty employees during a catastrophic illness of the employee or a qualifying family member, such as the spouse or a dependent child or parent of the employee.

"Catastrophic illness" means a medical condition, as certified by a physician, which requires an employee's absence from duty for a prolonged period of time and which, except for the catastrophic leave program, would result in a substantial loss of income to the employee because of the exhaustion of all earned sick and annual leave. Applications for catastrophic leave are reviewed by the Henderson State University Catastrophic Leave Committee.

Catastrophic Leave Policy Information:

Our policies are based on the state policies as documented by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). In some of their policies the institutions of higher education are able to make slight revisions if approved by the state and in some policies higher ed is exempt altogether. I have attached the Family Medical Leave policy (a federal policy at heart with some added regulations from the state), the Catastrophic Leave policy and the newest policy which became effective 2/16/17 regarding catastrophic leave pay for the mother during the first four weeks of maternity leave. I've looked for the policy on Shared Leave but it is no longer published as a stand alone policy in the State Personnel Policy listing. I've asked my OPM representative to help me find it. When shared leave was first made available in Arkansas, the institutions of higher ed had the option to participate or not. I haven't found any four year university doing shared leave in AR. The Catastrophic Leave Committee could consider it again, if I can get a clear updated policy from OPM. I understand it is being used at state agencies so it must still exist in some form.

This comment is correct and was based on the decision of the catastrophic leave committee at the time the option for shared leave was first presented (I don't remember the year) :[Also, per this staff member, someone in our human resources office has suggested that the reasoning behind not allowing staff members to donate their time is because it is believed that others may feel pressured to do so as well.](#)

VP signature is required on requests for Family Medical Leave (FMLA) and Catastrophic Leave as a method to be sure the administration has been notified that a serious problem is being faced by the employee and to alert the chain of command to work with the employee on scheduling leave. FMLA leave also requires the signatures of the department head, chair, dean. None of these people are given any medical details other than a general notification such as "the employee's child has a serious illness which the doctor has certified will require the parent to miss work for two weeks." However, often times the direct supervisor has been told more details by the employee. No one but HR sees the doctor certification or details, not even the catastrophic leave committee. Also, the Catastrophic Leave Committee is only authorized to recommend up to 80 hours of leave. If the situation has been doctor certified to require more leave, it is the VP or President that has the authority to extend the catastrophic leave beyond 80 hours.

When I first arrived in this job, the HSU practice was for an employee to use all of their accrued leave before requesting family medical leave. But the Attorney General and our General Counsel made it clear to me several years ago (don't remember when, but I did announce to campus several times) that FMLA leave for eligible employees should be started immediately when an employee is out for a serious illness or operation for

themselves or an immediate family member. Many of our long time supervisors and employees don't seem able to remember this change so I spend time contacting employees who may need family medical leave and get it started ASAP. Sharing the correct process in staff senate and your minutes would be great!

The federal government developed the family medical leave act because so many employers, then and even now, do not offer paid annual, sick or catastrophic leave to their employees. We are lucky to have all of those available to most of us. (9 month Faculty are not eligible to use catastrophic leave and do not accrue annual leave) I realize that employees who have worked with the state or HSU (depending on the type leave) for less than 2 years are in a tight spot, but until the state or federal laws change, I do not see a way for us to make that change ourselves. The recent maternity leave pay policy has amended the old policy to make catastrophic leave available for maternity leave pay after ONE year of higher ed employment or two years in public school. That amendment will have to be addressed by OPM in the near future to blend in with the current catastrophic leave eligibility rule of 2 years of employment and with no disciplinary action about abuse of leave and having 80 hours of accrued sick and annual before the onset of the illness.

And and and and and, the beat goes on and on. It's complicated and it drives me nuts. Wish they could make it clean and simple.

http://www.dfa.arkansas.gov/offices/personnelManagement/policy/Documents/50_02CatastrophicLeave.pdf

http://www.dfa.arkansas.gov/offices/personnelManagement/policy/Documents/50_07FamilyMedicalLeave.pdf