

Parental Leave Policy for Medical Students

Background

Washington University School of Medicine is committed to offering MD students, who experience the birth or adoption of a child, the opportunity for parental leave ("Parental Leave") while enrolled in the MD program.

Policy

This policy addresses the student's need to care for a new child following the birth or adoption of the child. The policy aims to provide flexibility to our students specific to their academic year to ideally maintain student status and maintain financial aid, if applicable. Parental Leave must be taken within the first 12 months after the child's birth or adoption. Parental Leave may require a change in the student's anticipated graduation date, as students are expected to complete their full curriculum and degree program requirements.

Depending on the length of Parental Leave taken, a student's full-time status may be impacted, which may in turn impact financial aid. Parental Leave may appear on the student's transcript and/or MSPE. Our goal is to mitigate these impacts as much as possible, and this necessitates early engagement with the Student Success Team (SST).

Since the requirements of the Gateway curriculum vary across the Phases, the specifics of the Parental Leave approved, including duration, may differ depending on the phase of the program in which the Parental Leave occurs. In no event would Parental Leave exceed 8 continuous weeks. Non-continuous leave may also be considered but cannot exceed a total of 8 weeks. If a student wishes to take additional time away beyond 8 weeks, they should request an additional leave of absence (LOA) from the MD program.

Given the structure of the course offerings, students taking Parental Leave during Phase 1 may require a one-year gap from Phase 1 as determined by the specific circumstances of the leave and in consultation with the Office of Medical Student Education (OMSE) leadership and the SST. If a student takes a one-year gap, the student must decide if they wish to take an LOA beyond the Parental Leave, or they may choose to develop a scholarly pursuit to work on during the remaining interim-year period, during which time the student would remain enrolled in the MD program.

During Phases 2 and 3, the student may be approved for an 8-week Parental Leave. Return to Phase 2 or 3 would generally be approved at the start of a clerkship or elective block.

MSTP students are guaranteed 60 calendar days under the New Child Leave Policy of the Office of Graduate Studies. MSTP students should notify the MSTP Executive Director of anticipated leave dates. The MSTP stipend may be affected if the student extends their parental leave past 8 weeks. Students with active NIH fellowships will need to notify the NIH if they extend their parental leave past 8 weeks.

Students who are recipients of financial aid must also meet with the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and Director of Financial Service in Office of Student Financial Planning.

International students holding a visa must also meet with the Office for International Students and Scholars.

A written Parental Leave Plan should be developed by the student in conjunction with the OMSE and the SST and submitted at least 3 months before the anticipated effective date of the Parental Leave via the Curriculum Modification Form. The plan should take into account the student's current and anticipated academic standing at the time of the Parental Leave.

Guidelines

This Parental Leave Policy is distinct from excused absences or medical leave due to pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions that may be available to pregnant or parenting students as reasonable modifications under Title IX. If a student wishes to seek a reasonable modification due to parenting, pregnancy, childbirth, or other pregnancy-related conditions, they should contact the Gender Equity and Title IX Office at 314-935-3393.

No policy can cover all circumstances, and we encourage all students to have early and frequent communication with the SST.