

**Year 3 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

The University of Arizona

Enhancing the University-Wide Parental Leave Policy

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

Embedding the Values of Diversity, Inclusion, and Respect into Recruitment, Hiring, Admissions, Retention, Promotion, and Advancement

Description of Work:

In support of the University of Arizona's commitment to being a family-friendly university, the Office of University Initiatives collaborated with Human Resources and a Parental Leave Working Group to expand parental leave for employees. The **Parental Leave Policy (Interim)** was signed on December 22, 2021 and went into effect on January 1, 2022. The expansion of parental leave is an important step in supporting our faculty and staff and creating the best work environment possible.

During the fall of 2021, a working group of faculty and staff from across the University came together to consider and make recommendations related to the expansion of our parental leave benefit. This work replaces the Parental Leave Policy in effect since July 1, 2014. Work on the expansion of parental leave was started before the COVID pandemic and had to be delayed until fall 2021 due to COVID. The policy is intentionally gender neutral to encourage all parents to take parental leave. The updated Parental Leave Policy is one of the most expansive and extensive policies to support caregivers launched at the University of Arizona. The Parental Leave Working Group compared leave policies at our institutional peers and crafted a policy that was competitive among that group. Supporting the well-being of our employees reflects our **core values** and fosters an inclusive culture. The evidence continues to demonstrate that parental leave and other caregiver-friendly practices facilitate a healthy workplace climate that benefits both the employee and the organization. The policy will help recruit and retain top talent and embeds our culture of diversity and inclusion across the entire institution.

The University of Arizona President, Dr. Robert C. Robbins, and senior leaders are committed to the University of Arizona being a family-friendly university. Based on research, expanding parental leave has the potential to benefit employee recruitment and retention, as well as improve employee health, well-being, morale, and productivity. Child health outcomes may also be improved. In families in which two parents are University employees, both are entitled to take paid and unpaid parental leave.

The major changes to the University' Parental Leave Policy are as follows:

- Doubled the paid parental leave from 6 weeks to 12 weeks
- Offer an additional 12 weeks of unpaid parental leave, when accrued sick, vacation, and

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- comp time can be used. Unpaid leave can also be used.
- This allows for up to 6 months of parental leave.
 - Expanded eligibility to include foster placement, guardianship placement, surrogacy, and stillbirth.
 - Parental leave can now be taken at any time in the first 12 months after a child joins a family and can start up to 2 weeks before it is anticipated that a child will join a family.
 - Flexible/intermittent leave can be requested and must be approved by the employee's supervisor.
 - Added 2 weeks of leave for miscarriage.
 - Added a non-retaliation clause that prohibits adverse action or retaliation against an employee who elects to take Parental Leave.
 - In support of this policy for faculty and staff, the Office of University Initiatives and Human Resources also worked with the Graduate College to increase paid parental leave for graduate assistants from 6 weeks to 12 weeks.

The public pieces of information are as follows:

- **Human Resources Parental Leave:** <https://hr.arizona.edu/employees-affiliates/leaves/paid-parental-leave>
- **Parental Leave Policy (Interim)**
- **Graduate Assistant Parental Leave Policy** <https://grad.arizona.edu/funding/ga/ga-parental-leave-policy>

As we know, parenting is just one of many types of caregiving. Faculty and staff care for family members who are sick or aging, have a disability, or need special assistance to navigate daily life. Life & Work Connections provides services and resources to support employees in pursuing their own well-being and in taking care of loved ones through all stages of life. These include services and resources for parents, employee assistance counseling, and adult and eldercare. The expansion of parental leave is an important step in supporting our faculty and staff and creating the best work environment possible.

Evaluation of the policy includes a follow up survey in 18 months. The survey will be sent to units to understand how the policy works in terms of benefits, challenges, and request for resource information. A pilot survey related to flexible work initiative https://hr.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/Flexible%20Work%20Initiative_Supervisors%207.21.22.pdf will be used to inform a follow up survey on the parental leave survey.

Website for further information (if applicable):

<https://hr.arizona.edu/employees-affiliates/leaves/paid-parental-leave>

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