

PERSONAL/EDUCATIONAL LEAVE (HR-4.13)	
Summary	Carolinas HealthCare System needs team members to come to work in order to forward the mission of patient care. However, sometimes a team member must be away from work for a longer period of time. Carolinas HealthCare System, through the Total Rewards Program, offers team members at least two chances to take longer periods of time off for non-medical reasons. One of these is a personal leave, which allows a team member time away to handle personal matters. The other is an educational leave which allows a team member time off to engage in educational goals.
Applies to:	➤ All Carolinas HealthCare System full-time, part-time, and weekender team members who have completed 90 days of employment.
Definitions	
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ General Guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal or Educational Leave and Time Off Benefits • Personal or Educational Leave and Health Plans/Life and Disability Benefits • Returning to Work After a Personal or Educational Leave ➤ Team Member Responsibilities ➤ Leader Responsibilities
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PERSONAL/EDUCATIONAL LEAVE**(HR-4.13)****General Guidelines**

- Personal leave is sometimes offered to team members needing time away from work to deal with extraordinary personal matters. It is only granted when Paid Time Off (PTO) is gone and when the situation does not meet requirements of another leave of absence. Personal leave may be granted for a period of 31 to 90 days on a continuous (not intermittent) basis.
- Educational leave is sometimes offered to team members needing time away to study in a job-related course leading to a degree or certification. The area of study is to be one that will provide a benefit to Carolinas HealthCare System upon the return to work by the team member. Educational leaves may be granted for a period up to 12 months on a continuous (not intermittent) basis.
- Carolinas HealthCare System relies on team members being at work to forward the mission of patient care. The System strives to maintain a balance between this mission and team member needs and desires. While Carolinas HealthCare System is able to offer personal and educational leave time, unfortunately job protection is not extended during these types of leaves.
- Personal and educational leaves are granted at the sole discretion of Carolinas HealthCare System leadership.
- Personal and/or educational leaves may not be used to extend a leave of absence beyond a team member's Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) protection.

Personal or Educational Leave and Time Off Benefits

- During an approved personal leave, a team member must use any accrued PTO. Non-paid time will not be granted unless PTO is exhausted.
- During an approved educational leave, a team member may choose whether to use PTO and how much PTO to use. If requested by the team member, earned PTO up to the length of the leave will be paid in one lump sum payment. This is paid at the start of the leave. Any remaining earned PTO time is held and available for use once the team member returns to work. If the team member ends their work relationship with Carolinas HealthCare System before returning to work, PTO will be paid out according to policy.
- Team members on personal or educational leave do not earn PTO during their leave.

Personal and Educational Leave and Health Plans/Life & Disability Benefits

- During a personal or educational leave, a team member's health plan, life, and disability benefits coverage will stop at the end of the next pay period.
- Team members on leave may continue health plan coverage by paying the COBRA cost. COBRA is the full cost of the health plan plus 2% and does not include a share paid by Carolinas HealthCare System. Team members will receive a notice in their home mail about COBRA. If a team member chooses to continue health plan coverage during their leave, the payment must be made by the first of every month.

- Team members may also continue life and disability plan coverage. Team members may contact Carolinas HealthCare System Benefits Administration for an application and assistance. Applications must be turned in within 31 days of the date coverage ends.
- Team members on personal or educational leave may not contribute to the 401(k) program. However, team members with 401(k) loans must continue to make payments. Retirement/pension may continue to be earned throughout the leave based on plan rules and hours worked.

Returning to Work After a Personal or Educational Leave

- Carolinas HealthCare System welcomes team members returning from a personal or educational leave back to the workplace, and is in hopes that the leave benefited and re-energized the team member.
- If a team member's job is still available, the team member will be welcomed back to that job.
- If a team member's job is no longer available, the team member will be assisted by a coordinator of Transition Services in finding a job within the System. In this case, the team member will have up to 30 days to find a job within the System. If a job is not found in that time, regretfully the work relationship will end.
 - If placement is not secured within 30 days, the team member may reapply for work, but must follow new hire procedures.
- If a team member is offered a comparable job and refuses to take it, this is considered a voluntary resignation.
- If a team member does not return to work from their personal or educational leave, this is considered a voluntary resignation.

Team Member Responsibilities

- To request a leave, a team member is asked to complete the [Request for Leave](#). Once completed, team members are asked to give the request to their unit or department leader.
- Before the start of an approved leave, team members are asked to be aware of all ending dates for health plan, life and disability benefits. If assistance is needed, please contact Carolinas HealthCare System Benefits Administration before the leave starts. If continued coverage is desired, team members are responsible for any paperwork and/or payments due. Unfortunately, missed deadlines may result in benefits ending until a team member's return to work after a leave.
- Prior to the end of a team member's leave, the team member is to contact their unit or department leader to check for job openings.
- Prior to the end of a team member's leave, team members are to contact Leave of Absence Administration (LOAA) Department in Human Resources.

Leader Responsibilities

- When a request for leave form is received, the leader(s) of the unit or department make the initial decision whether to grant the leave. The team member's Vice President must be consulted in this decision and also approve and sign the form. Factors considered in granting or denying leave include staffing, the ability to get replacement staffing, and whether the time requested creates a hardship for the unit or department. Human Resources may also be consulted for an opinion.
- To start the leave, the completed Request for Leave must be turned into Leave of Absence Administration (LOAA) Department in Human Resources. It may be faxed to (704) 446-6624. Leaders should call (704) 631-0262 to make sure the fax was received.
- If the team member has requested to use earned PTO, it will be paid at the beginning of the leave. Leaders need to make sure PTO usage is correct in the timekeeping system.
- Once the leave has been approved, leaders may post the team member's job at the start day of the leave. Team members are not given job protection during a personal or educational leave. However, team members are all valuable to our System and our goal is to retain team members returning from leaves. If the position is filled when the team member wishes to return, the leader and the LOAA case manager are to coordinate discussion between the team member and the transition services coordinator who will assist the team member with seeking other jobs within the System.