

Cover Page

Policy Title	Parental Leave
Previous titles (if any)	
Policy objective	The purpose of this policy is to provide time off to eligible staff members to nurture, bond and care for their infants or adopted children. It sets out the eligibility and duration of parental leave.
Target audience	All staff members
Risk control matrix	Control activities that are part of the process are detailed in the Risk Control Matrix
Checklist	N/A
Effective date	01 June 2023
Revision History	
Mandatory review date	01 June 2026
Policy owner unit	Division for Human Resources
Approval	Link to signed approval template

Parental Leave

I. Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy is to provide eligible staff members with paid time-off to nurture, bond and care for their infants or adopted children. It sets out the duration and entitlements associated with parental leave further to United Nations Staff Rule 6.3.
2. Parental leave takes into consideration gender equality and the paramount interests of children while attracting and retaining staff. It seeks to foster an environment that balances personal, family and professional commitments.

II. Policy

3. UNFPA applies the parental leave framework on an equal basis to all parents regardless of contract duration, and does not use gender identity terms. It includes those who may identify as female or male or non-binary, who may be LGBTQIA+ and who may be in a union or not and married or not. Paid parental leave is provided to support adoption and surrogacy in the same manner as planned and unintended pregnancies.
4. Parental leave is an entitlement which should be enjoyed and availed of freely by all eligible staff members. Staff members who avail of parental leave should be treated without prejudice. Accordingly, supervisors and staff members should plan for absences in advance to facilitate the staff member's full utilization of parental leave.
5. This policy outlines parental leave available for both gestational and non-gestational parents, duration given for each, as well as conditions for the approval of such leave. The policy establishes the following:
 - a. Definitions;
 - b. Parental leave for gestational parents;
 - c. Parental leave for non-gestational parents; and
 - d. Extension of appointment for utilization of the parental leave entitlement.
6. The policy governs the administration of parental leave in respect of a child born or adopted on or after 1 January 2023, provided the staff member was in service at the time of birth or adoption.

Definitions for the purpose of this policy

7. 'Gestational parents' are staff members who give birth to a child.

8. ‘Non-gestational parents’ are staff members who do not give birth to a child but are legally recognized as the parent of the child through a birth certificate or other legal document.
9. ‘Surrogacy’ refers to an arrangement supported by a legal agreement, whereby an individual agrees to bear a child for a staff member who will become the child’s legal parent after the birth.

A. Parental leave for gestational parents

Eligibility

10. Staff members on permanent, fixed-term, or temporary appointments are eligible for parental leave with full pay subject to the provisions of this policy.
11. The gestational parent must be a staff member at the time of the child’s birth.

Duration

12. Gestational parents shall be entitled to a total duration of 26 weeks of paid leave as follows:
 - a. two (2) weeks of mandatory pre-natal leave,
 - b. eight (8) weeks of mandatory leave for post-partum recovery, and
 - c. 16 weeks of parental leave for bonding with the child.

Pre-natal period

13. Pre-natal leave for gestational parents must commence no later than two weeks prior to the anticipated date of birth as shown on a certificate from a licensed medical practitioner or midwife. If there are doubts as to the validity of the medical certificate, the matter must be referred to the office of the United Nations Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH)¹ or to a medical facility authorized by DHMOSH.
14. At the request of the staff member, pre-natal leave may commence earlier than two weeks prior to the date of delivery.
 - a. Pre-natal leave shall commence no earlier than six weeks prior to the anticipated date of birth.
 - b. A staff member may be permitted to work half days between the sixth and second week preceding the expected date of birth. In such cases, the half days of absence shall be charged to the staff member’s parental leave entitlement.

¹ Inquiries may be addressed by email to medicaldirector@un.org

15. In the interest of safeguarding the health and safety of staff members serving in duty stations with the hardship classification D and E, gestational parents may request to avail of remote work prior to the period of mandatory pre-natal leave, under conditions established in the [UNFPA policy on Flexible Working Arrangements](#). Supervisors and staff members should discuss duties to be performed remotely, which may include tasks not normally undertaken by the staff member if otherwise the staff member's regular functions are not suitable for remote work.
16. If during the period preceding the mandatory pre-natal leave, the staff member is not fit to continue working, the matter shall be referred to the Director, DHMOSH or designated medical officer to determine whether the staff member is not fit to continue to work on a full-time or part-time basis. The staff member's absence from work prior to the period of mandatory pre-natal leave shall be charged to sick leave when certified as such by the United Nations Medical Director, DHMOSH or designated officer.

Post-delivery period

17. Any unused pre-natal leave shall be added to the mandatory leave for post-partum recovery.
18. Gestational parents are entitled to avail of their full 26 weeks entitlement in one continuous period. At the request of the staff member, an earlier date of return may be permitted, provided:
 - a. a minimum period of eight (8) continuous weeks following delivery has elapsed, and
 - b. the combined total of pre-natal leave and post-delivery leave taken is 10 weeks or more.
19. Any remaining balance of parental leave may be used fully, partially or not at all within 12 months from the date of the child's birth.
20. When the staff member returns to work with a balance of parental leave, the remaining parental leave may be taken in separate periods of one calendar week increments (seven calendar days).
21. Parental leave is granted in weeks and not daily increments. Therefore any official holidays during approved periods of parental leave do not give rise to additional time-off.
22. Any portion of parental leave that is not utilized by the staff member shall be forfeited. Parental leave is not transferable to another staff member.

Extenuating circumstances

23. In the event that an embryo or fetus dies before the 20th week of pregnancy, the staff member may avail of sick leave to help with the medical and physical recovery on the advice of the United Nations Medical Director, DHMOSH or any medical facility authorized by DHMOSH.
24. In the event that a fetus dies on or after the 20th week of pregnancy prior to delivery, the staff member at their request may be granted up to two (2) weeks of special leave with full pay to help with the medical and physical recovery. The staff member must provide a certificate of fetal death from a licensed medical practitioner to the office of the United Nations Medical Director. Such leave should be taken immediately following the loss of the fetus.
25. In the event that a child is stillborn, the staff member may be granted up to four (4) weeks of special leave with full pay in lieu of their balance of parental leave. The staff member must provide a certificate of death from a licensed medical practitioner to the office of the United Nations Medical Director.
26. A parent who on expiration of their parental leave or special leave with full pay, is unable to resume duty due to serious complications, must submit a request for sick leave together with a supporting medical certificate.

B. Parental leave for non-gestational parents***Eligibility***

27. Staff members on permanent, fixed-term, or temporary appointments who are non-gestational parents, are eligible for parental leave subject to a maximum of six requests over the staff member's period of continuous or separate service with UNFPA or any other United Nations organization.
28. The non-gestational parent must be a staff member at the time of the child's birth or adoption.
29. Parental leave may be granted to non-gestational parents when:
 - a. the child meets the eligibility requirements to be recognized as a dependent child of the staff member under the applicable rules; or
 - b. the child meets the eligibility requirements to be recognized as a dependent child of the co-parent who is also a United Nations system staff member.
30. A minimum of 12 months is required between the end date of parental leave and the start date of the next parental leave period.

Additional eligibility criteria in the case of adoption

31. In the event of adoption of a child, the following conditions also apply:
- a. The child is less than 18 years old at the time of adoption;
 - b. The child is not a stepchild or sibling; and
 - c. The child has not been living with the staff member for a period exceeding six (6) months at the time of request.
32. The request for parental leave following the adoption of a child must be accompanied by supporting documentation as indicated below.
- a. The child's birth certificate or, when it is impossible to obtain a birth certificate, other satisfactory documentary evidence of the birth of the adopted child.
 - b. When a child has been legally adopted, the staff member shall submit official documentary evidence that the child has been adopted in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions or that the customary or *de facto* adoption of the child is formally recognized by prescribed court procedure.
 - c. When legal adoption proceedings have been initiated but are not completed, the staff member shall submit official documentary evidence that an adoption proceeding has been initiated and that, pending completion of the proceeding, the child is being entrusted to the staff member's care. Once adoption formalities have been completed, official proof that adoption has taken place must be provided.
 - d. In cases of customary or *de facto* adoption, the staff member shall be required to submit a statement from the appropriate national authorities that legal adoption is not possible because there is no statutory provision for adoption or prescribed court procedure for official recognition of customary or *de facto* adoption. Additionally, the staff member will be required to certify by affidavit or other appropriate formal statement that the child will be residing with the staff member, and that the staff member will assume the duties and obligations of the child's parent. Once the child has arrived in the staff member's home, the staff member shall also submit satisfactory evidence that the child resides with the staff member and that a parental relationship has been established.

Additional eligibility criteria in the case of surrogacy

33. The request for parental leave following the birth of a child through surrogacy must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

- a. The child's birth certificate or, when it is impossible to obtain a birth certificate, a legal contract signed by the gestational carrier and the staff member.
- b. If the surrogacy proceedings are still ongoing in court, the staff member shall submit legal documentary evidence showing that the process is still ongoing and that it is formally recognized by the prescribed court.
- c. In cases of customary or *de facto* surrogacy, the staff member shall be required to submit a statement from the appropriate national authorities that surrogacy is not possible because there is neither a statutory provision for it nor prescribed court procedure for official recognition of customary or *de facto* surrogacy arrangement. Additionally, the staff member will be required to certify by affidavit that they are the biological parent of the child.

Duration

34. In accordance with [United Nations Staff Rule 6.3](#), non-gestational parents shall be granted 16 weeks of parental leave.

Utilization

35. An eligible staff member is not required to take parental leave. The staff member may choose to use it fully, partially or not at all.
36. Parental leave must be exhausted within 12 months from the date of the child's birth or the child's arrival in the staff member's home. Any portion of parental leave that is not utilized by the staff member shall be forfeited. Parental leave is not transferable to another staff member.
37. Parental leave for non-gestational parents may be taken only after the birth of the child or initiation of legal adoption proceedings. Any other leave taken prior to the birth or adoption proceedings shall be charged to annual leave.
38. Parental leave for non-gestational parents may be taken at any time within 12 months after the child's birth or child's arrival in the staff member's home either:
 - a. continuously;
 - b. continuously as half days in combination with half-days of work; or
 - c. in periods of one calendar week increments (seven calendar days).
39. Parental leave is granted in weeks and not daily increments. Therefore any official holidays during approved periods of parental leave do not give rise to additional time-off.

C. Extension of appointment for utilization of parental leave entitlement

40. A staff member with an appointment governed by the United Nations Staff Regulations and Staff Rules will be considered for extension of their appointment under the same criteria as other staff. The fact that a staff member is or will be on parental leave shall not be a factor in considering extension of their appointment.
41. If on the basis of considerations unrelated to the staff member's parental leave, a decision is made not to extend an appointment due to expire during the period of parental leave, the appointment will be extended to cover the full duration of the staff member's parental leave entitlement provided the full duration of parental leave is taken in one continuous period. This provision shall not apply when the parental leave was not utilized continuously and immediately following the birth or adoption of the child, or in cases where the appointment of a gestational parent expires more than two weeks before the anticipated date of birth.
42. Extensions of appointments solely to allow staff members to exhaust their parental leave entitlement shall not give rise to any further entitlement to salary increment, annual leave, sick leave, or home leave, but credit towards repatriation grant may continue to accrue if the staff member has not returned to the home country. UNFPA reserves the right to pay a lump sum amount equivalent to the salary and entitlements for the balance of the period of the unused portion of parental leave in lieu of an extension of appointment.

III. Procedures

43. Absences for purposes of utilizing parental leave must be planned and approved in advance by the staff member's supervisor.
 - a. Gestational parents shall submit requests for pre-natal and parental leave at least two (2) months in anticipation of the birth, accompanied by a certificate from a licensed medical practitioner or midwife attesting to the expected delivery date.
 - b. Non-gestational parents who wish to avail of parental leave immediately following the birth or adoption of their child, should discuss their request for parental leave with their supervisor at least two (2) months in advance of the expected delivery date or anticipated date of adoption.
 - c. Parental leave that is not taken immediately following the birth or adoption of a child must be planned in the same manner as a staff member availing of annual leave and is subject to exigencies of service. A staff member will not be obliged to forfeit their parental leave entitlement under this provision.

44. Staff members must submit their request for parental leave in Quantum.
- a. Requests from gestational parents must be accompanied by a certificate from a licensed medical practitioner or midwife attesting to the expected delivery date. A copy of the child's birth certificate must be submitted after delivery.
 - b. Requests from non-gestational parents must be accompanied by a copy of the child's birth certificate and supporting documentation outlined in paragraphs 13, 32 and 33 as applicable.
 - c. If a birth certificate is not available, the staff member must submit satisfactory documentary evidence as per local law at the place of the child's birth or adoption.
45. Parental leave requires multi-step approvals.
- a. First, the supervisor must first approve any request for parental leave as planned and discussed with the staff member. This approval is registered in Quantum.
 - b. Second, the human resources business partner validates a staff member's eligibility and balance of leave for approval. The human resources business partner may delegate approval in Quantum to the office human resources focal point.

Roles and Responsibilities

46. The staff member is responsible for:
- a. requesting pre-natal leave two months in advance of anticipated date of birth;
 - b. discussing requests for parental leave with their supervisor to ascertain exigencies of service when parental leave, or any balance thereof, is deferred following the birth or adoption of a child;
 - c. utilizing their parental leave entitlement in increments of one calendar weeks (seven calendar days) within the first 12 months of the child's birth;
 - d. submitting supporting documentation to the division for human resources, including the certificate of birth or adoption as applicable; and
 - e. discussing any requests for ad hoc remote working arrangements in accordance with the [UNFPA policy on Flexible Working Arrangements](#).
47. The supervisor is responsible for:
- a. maintaining a staff member's pregnancy or adoption plans confidential;
 - b. discussing leave options with the staff member that are mutually agreeable when parental leave is deferred following the birth or adoption of a child;
 - c. approving absence periods;

- d. discussing work related priorities and establishing a work plan that accounts for the planned absence of staff members on parental leave; and
- e. helping staff members navigate through any changes in the work unit that occurred while the staff member was on parental leave.

48. The division for human resources is responsible for:

- a. advising staff members of their parental leave entitlement; and
- b. authorizing parental leave entitlement in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

IV. Other

Service credits

49. Service credits shall accrue during periods of parental leave and shall be credited on a monthly basis, except when an appointment is solely extended to enable a staff member to utilize such leave.

Annual Leave

50. Staff members should utilize their parental leave entitlement prior to requesting annual leave during their eligibility period. Annual leave should only be requested when:

- a. it is needed for absences shorter than the one week increments of parental leave;
- b. it implies time spent away from the child;
- c. the staff member is otherwise at risk of losing accrued annual leave at the end of the leave year.

51. It is not a prerequisite for staff members to first exhaust their accrued annual leave before taking parental leave.

Sick leave

52. For gestational parents, parental leave should be used for any pregnancy-related medical conditions requiring leave during the mandatory weeks of pre-natal leave and post-partum recovery, except if serious medical complications certified by the United Nations Medical Director arise that incapacitates the staff member from providing reasonable basic care to the newborn child.

53. Certified sick leave for non-pregnancy related medical conditions may otherwise be granted during approved periods of parental leave. The staff member should advise their Human Resources Business Partner of approved certified sick leave to ensure their absence is not counted against their parental leave entitlement.

Falsification of data, fabrication or counterfeiting supporting documentation

54. If a staff member falsifies data, fabricates or counterfeit supporting documents or intentionally violates the parental leave conditions specified herein, they shall be subject to investigation and disciplinary action.

V. Risk Control Matrix

Risk Description	First Line of Defense Controls			Second Line of Defense Controls		
	Control Activity Description	Reference (paragraph #)	Who performs	Control Activity Description	Reference (paragraph #)	Who performs
Parental leave entitlement is applied incorrectly	Absences for purposes of utilizing parental leave must be planned and approved in advance by the staff member's supervisor.	43	Supervisor	The division for human resources is responsible for authorizing parental leave in accordance with the provisions of this policy.	48b	Human resources business partner who may delegate to UNDP benefits and entitlements section
Flexibility to use parental leave in weekly increments leads to poor planning for utilization within the eligibility period.	Staff members should utilize their parental leave entitlement prior to requesting annual leave during their eligibility period.	50	Staff member	The supervisor is responsible for discussing leave options with the staff member that are mutually agreeable when parental leave is deferred following the birth or adoption of a child.	47b	Supervisor