

# BENEFIT GUIDE

## EXTENDED ILLNESS, DISABILITY OR DEATH

A brief overview of navigating benefits during a leave of absence

### Taking Time for Your Health: A Guide for Leave of Absence

Life brings both challenges and changes, and your well-being is our top priority. If you're facing an extended illness or disability, or supporting a loved one through a serious health condition, we want you to feel supported every step of the way.

This guide is here to help you and your family understand your benefits and the resources available during this time. We recognize that navigating a leave of absence can be overwhelming, and it's our sincere hope that the information provided offers clarity, comfort, and guidance.

Review this guide for an overview of how to apply, steps to take based on the type of leave you're taking, and the steps to take when returning to work.

Inside you will find:

- What to do to apply for a leave of absence
- How to receive disability benefits on leave
- What happens to your benefits when you're on a leave
- Contacts and helpful resources

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IOWA
Department of Administrative Services

# Extended Illness Guide

### The Key Person to Assist You

Each state agency has an employee who functions as a human resource associate (HRA). These individuals understand each employee's status and can explain which benefits are available for a particular situation. The HRA assigned to your department should be the first point of contact for you and your family members. If you are not sure who your HRA is, contact your supervisor.



## Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

You may be eligible for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). If you believe your situation would qualify under FMLA, please reach out to your HRA or the Leave Administration Team at loa@das.iowa.gov. You can also refer to the LOA Decision Tree. FMLA leaves may be initiated in Workday using this Smart Guide for reference. During an FMLA leave of absence, your group health benefits will be maintained. FMLA leave may be paid (using sick time off, vacation, or compensatory time off) or unpaid.
If you are employed by the State Fair Board or the Legislative Branch, please contact your supervisor or HRA for the appropriate paperwork.

For the most up to date information regarding an FMLA Leave of Absence, please reach out to loa@das.iowa.gov, or reference the DAS website: https://das.iowa.gov/state-employees/human-resources/employee-benefits-programs/managing-your-leaves-absence/fmla-family-medical-leave-act

## Pay Continuation

### Sick Leave

Most employees working for the State of Iowa earn sick leave. You may use your unused sick leave when away from work due to an extended illness. As long as you are using your sick leave, you will continue to accrue sick leave hours based on your accrual schedule. These accrued hours are added to your sick leave balance. Your current sick leave balance can be found on your most recent payslip or your HRA can tell you your sick leave balance.

## Vacation Time Off

You may use your vacation leave during an extended illness if such use is approved by your department. Your HRA can explain how to request approval from your department.
Similar to sick leave, as long as you are using your own vacation, you will continue to accrue vacation hours based on your accrual schedule. These hours will be added to your vacation balance. Your current vacation balance can be found on your most recent payslip or your HRA can tell you your vacation balance.

## Compensatory Leave

You may use your accrued compensatory leave during an extended illness.

## Paid Parental Leave

State employees eligible for the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) can request up to four weeks (160 hours) of paid time off for parental leave, depending on their qualifying event. This includes employees who are adopting, giving birth, or have a spouse that is giving birth. Refer to the Paid Parental leave FAQ for more information.

# Leave without Pay

When you have exhausted all of your sick, vacation, and compensatory time off, you may request leave without pay. The leave without pay processes and procedures may differ depending upon your collective bargaining agreement or the administrative rules. Consult your collective bargaining agreement or see your HRA/HRC for more information.

## Donated Leave for Catastrophic Illness

When you have exhausted all of your sick, vacation, and compensatory time off, other State of Iowa employees may donate their accumulated vacation leave to you, if you have a catastrophic illness. Consult your collective bargaining agreement or see your HRA/HRC for more information.

## Supplementing Workers' Compensation Benefits

If you are on an extended leave due to a work-related injury, you may elect to use your sick, vacation, and compensatory time off to supplement workers' compensation benefits.
You may elect to supplement your workers' compensation benefits any time during the period you are receiving benefits.
If you elect to supplement your workers' compensation benefits with your accrued time off, the supplementary payments continue until your sick, vacation, and compensatory time is exhausted or you are no longer eligible for workers' compensation benefits, whichever comes first.
For the most up-to-date information regarding Supplementing Workers' Compensation Benefits, please reach out to your HRA or email loa@das.iowa.gov.

# Benefits During Paid Leave

## Health and Dental Insurance

Payroll deductions continue for health and dental insurance when you are on paid leave. The State of Iowa continues to pay its share of health and dental insurance premiums until your paid leave is exhausted or until your employment is terminated, whichever comes first.

## Life Insurance

The State of Iowa continues to pay your basic life and long term disability insurance premiums while you are on paid leave. If you elected supplemental life insurance, premiums continue to be deducted from your payslip.

## Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

During a paid leave of absence, you cannot change your pretax deductions for the health FSA. You are not able to claim dependent care expenses if you are capable of self-care during your paid leave. If you are incapable of self-care, contact your HRA to discuss the situation.

## Deferred Compensation

If you participate in the state's deferred compensation program (Retirement Investors' Club or RIC), you may continue to make contributions while you are on a paid leave of absence. You can discontinue your contributions at any time.

# Benefits During Unpaid Leave

## Health and Dental Insurance

If you are granted leave without pay after you exhaust your paid leave, you may continue your insurance through COBRA. If you are on approved FMLA leave, the state's share will continue until the end of the month your FMLA ends. If your unpaid leave is longer than 30 days, you will be offered COBRA coverage. Contact your HRA for more information about changes during a non-FMLA unpaid leave of absence greater than 30 days.

## Life Insurance

If you are approved for leave without pay, contact your HRA for payment instructions to continue your supplemental life insurance. Premium payments must continue for supplemental life coverage to remain in force in order for you to be eligible for waiver of premium.

## Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

In general, your contributions to both the health and dependent care FSA cease and coverage stops while you are on an unpaid leave of absence. If you are on FMLA, you may cancel your health or dependent care FSA.

You may also elect to continue your health FSA coverage while on FMLA by making arrangements to pay the contributions due during your leave.

Eligible health expenses may be submitted for reimbursement through the end of the month that you had coverage. Claims may be filed through April 15 of the following year. Direct your detailed questions concerning the FSA program to the FSA Program Administrator at fsa@das.iowa.gov or contact ASIFlex at 800-659-3035.

## Deferred Compensation

Deductions to the deferred compensation program stop when your paid leave is exhausted. Contributions to deferred compensation can only be made through payroll deductions. You may be eligible to receive income from your deferred compensation account while you are on an unpaid leave of absence. You can apply for an Unforeseeable Emergency Withdrawal.

## Workers' Compensation

Payroll deductions continue for health, dental, life and long-term disability insurance when you supplement workers' compensation benefits with paid leave. The State of Iowa continues to pay its' share of your health, dental, life, and long-term disability insurance premiums until your paid leave or your FMLA is exhausted, whichever comes later.

After your paid leave is exhausted, the state may continue to pay its' share up to an additional four months (excluding Iowa Veterans Home).

If you do not elect to supplement workers' compensation benefits with paid leave, the state's share for health, dental, life, and long-term disability insurance may be paid for up to four months or until FMLA is exhausted, whichever is later. At the end of the period, you may continue health and dental insurance coverage through COBRA.

Note: FMLA leave runs concurrently with (at the same time as) a workers' compensation absence. Your HRA will give you instructions on how to continue your health and dental insurance coverage.

## Employee Assistance Program

You are eligible to use Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services when you are on a paid or unpaid leave of absence. To contact the EAP, call 800-833-3031.

# Long Term Disability (LTD)

## General Information

The State of Iowa provides long term disability (LTD) coverage to all eligible full-time employees. During the first 12 months of disability, the LTD plan replaces a portion of your earnings if you have a disability that prevents you from performing the tasks required by your regular occupation. After 12 months of disability, the LTD plan provides income if you are unable to perform the duties of any gainful occupation for which you are reasonably suited by education, training or experience.

The LTD benefit is 60 percent of up to $60,000 of your annual pre-disability earnings.

LTD benefits will continue until:

- You recover,
- You no longer meet the definition of disabled, or
- You reach Social Security Normal Retirement Age (SSNRA). SSNRA is the age when you are eligible for retirement benefits under the Social Security Act, and is based on the year of your birth.

There are special provisions if you are age 60 or older. Contact the Iowa Department of Administrative Services at claimsltdlife@das.iowa.gov for more information about these special provisions.

## Applying for LTD

Your HRA will provide you with options for applying. You can complete it online or over the phone, which are the preferred methods, or through paper applications.

For additional information, see the Long-Term Disability webpage and review the FAQs about filing an LTD Claim.

## LTD Benefit Offset

Your monthly LTD benefit may be offset (reduced) by other payments (such as Social Security Disability Income, Workers' Compensation, Veterans Administration benefits, or other state or group disability payments) received as a result of your disability. Your monthly LTD benefit will not be less than $50. Disability or retirement benefits received from the Iowa Public Employees Retirement System (IPERS) are not deducted from your LTD benefit payments.

## LTD Elimination Period

If you are approved for LTD benefits, your LTD benefits will begin on the first day following the “elimination period”. The elimination period begins on the first day you meet the LTD plan’s definition of disability and continues for 90 working days or until sick leave is exhausted, whichever comes later. You must be disabled (prevented from performing the tasks required by your regular occupation) for 90 working days. Days that you work during the elimination period may not count toward satisfying the 90 days working day elimination period.

## Insurance Benefits during the Elimination Period

The state's share of your health, dental and basic life insurance premiums continues while you are using paid sick leave or vacation, or you are on unpaid FMLA leave. When you are on approved leave without pay, the state share of your health and dental insurance premiums will stop at the end of the month of your last paid workday or your last month of FMLA leave, whichever comes later.

You may either drop your health and dental coverage or you may continue your insurance through COBRA.

Your life insurance premiums will stop at the end of the month of your last paid workday or your last month of FMLA leave, whichever comes later. You may either drop your life insurance coverage or you may continue your insurance through portability or conversion.

More information can be found on the Continuing Coverage on LTD web page.

# Benefits upon LTD Approval

Tax Implications -LTD benefit payments are taxable income.

## Continuation of Health and Dental Insurance

The state's share of the health and dental premiums will cease at the end of the month in which your employment terminates, your paid leave is exhausted, or your FMLA is exhausted. You must pay the full monthly premium for any insurance coverage you choose to keep. You will be directly billed by the insurance carrier. To be eligible to continue coverage upon termination, you must have maintained continuous coverage while you were still considered an employee. You have two options for continuing your health and/or dental insurance when your employment terminates due to LTD benefits approval.

Your two options are the Retired/Disabled Direct Pay Group or the COBRA Group. You must decide which group to join when your employment terminates. If your employment terminates prior to your approval for LTD benefits, COBRA will be your only option. You will be given an opportunity to move from the COBRA Group to the Retired/Disabled Direct Pay Group once your LTD benefits are approved.

## COBRA Group

After your employment terminates, you may continue coverage in this group for a maximum of 18 months (29 months if approved for disability by the Social Security Administration at any time during the first 60 days of COBRA coverage). You will be sent information about continuing coverage through COBRA within two weeks of the date of your final paycheck. When your COBRA continuation period ends, you will be offered an opportunity to purchase an individual health and/or dental plan.

## Retired/Disabled Direct Pay Group

You may continue coverage in this group for as long you receive monthly LTD benefits. Applications to join the Retired/Disabled Direct Pay Group may be obtained from your HRA. When long term disability benefits are terminated, you are no longer eligible to remain in the Retired/ Disabled Direct Pay Group for health and dental coverage unless you are drawing a monthly IPERS pension benefit.

## Continuation of Life Insurance after LTD Approval

If you are approved for long-term disability before you reach the age of 60, your basic and supplemental life insurance may continue without insurance premium payments, provided that your life insurance coverage remained in force until LTD benefits become effective. This is known as “waiver of premium”. If you are approved for waiver of premium, life insurance premiums are waived for as long as you receive LTD benefits.

Supplemental life insurance premium payments must continue during the qualifying period for LTD. If your long-term disability benefits are terminated, your life insurance will no longer be continued through waiver of premium. The life insurance carrier is obligated to allow you to convert to an individual policy. If you are over the age of 60 when you become disabled, you have up to 90 days from the date you cease active work to convert or port your life insurance to an individual policy.

## Deferred Compensation after LTD Benefits Approval

When your employment with the State of Iowa is terminated, you may leave your money in your deferred compensation investments or request a taxable distribution or rollover. For more specific RIC program information or to obtain forms, you can visit the Iowa Retirement Investors' Club (RIC) website or speak to a RIC team member at 866-460-4692.

## Worker’s Compensation

If you have applied for Worker's Compensation benefits and LTD benefits, please notify your LTD claims examiner if there are any changes in your Workers' Compensation benefits. Please be sure to also notify your Workers' Compensation claims examiner of any LTD benefits you receive.

Some Workers' Compensation benefits may be offset by LTD benefits or LTD may be able offset by certain Workers' Compensation benefits. This will depend on the type of Workers' Compensation benefit being paid. Please ensure you coordinate with your Workers' Compensation examiner on this issue.

## Annual Open Enrollment Period

If you continue your insurance coverage with the State of Iowa's Retired/Disabled Direct Pay Group or the COBRA Group, you will be able to participate in the annual open enrollment period, which will allow you to change your health plan every year that you are eligible for coverage.

You can continue your group health and group dental coverage separately or together. You do not have to elect to continue coverage in both plans.You can also change your health and/or dental coverage from family to single coverage at the time you continue coverage. Your benefits as a member of either the Retired/Disabled Direct Pay Group or the COBRA Group are identical to benefits for the plan you held as an active employee. You may drop your state group plan completely. However, there is no provision for rejoining the group at a later date.

## Social Security

You may want to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits at your nearest Social Security office. LTD benefits are reduced by any SSDI received by you and and your dependents as a result of your disability. You can obtain Social Security information at 800-772-1213. Explain your situation and ask for assistance. (See the sections on the Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System and the Peace Officers Retirement System below).

## Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS)

If you are covered by the Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS) and become eligible for LTD benefits, call an IPERS retirement specialist at 800-622-3849 or email info@ipers.org to learn if you qualify for disability benefits and how your retirement benefits are affected by disability.

## Peace Officers Retirement System (PORS)

If you are a peace officer employed by the Iowa Department of Public Safety and become eligible for LTD benefits, the POR may provide a disability income. Contact your HRA to learn if you qualify for a disability benefits.

## Employment Status

If you are approved for long-term disability benefits, your employment with the State of Iowa is terminated.

## Recall Provisions

If your physician has released you to return to work, you may qualify for and have recall rights to some state job classifications. To receive application information regarding recall, contact your former department HRA or call a Department of Administrative Services representative at 515-281-5889.

# Military Service Leave

Employees who are called for military duty or are enlisting as a member of the National Guard, organized reserve, or any component part of the military of the State of Iowa or the United States and are a non-temporary employee will be paid their regular salary for time spent on military service for up to 30 days per calendar year. For military leaves exceeding 30 days, the employee will request a military service leave (paid) and the employee will be paid for all 30 workdays, provided by law, or the remainder if some has already been used for the calendar year, from the employee's last day at work.

## Health, Dental, Life and LTD Insurance Benefits

Employees receiving family health and dental insurance under the State's group plans may wish to continue that coverage for their dependents. Coverage under the State's group plans will continue for the period of time the employee continues to receive uninterrupted military service days, compensatory or vacation pay. Once an employee's paid time off ends, and the employee begins military service leave (unpaid) of more than 30 calendar days, the State share of the employee's health and dental insurance will end.

In that case, the last month of State share eligibility will be the month in which the employee's paid time off is exhausted. Once the employee's eligibility for coverage under the State's group ends, coverage cannot be reinstated until the employee returns to employment.
The employee may elect to continue coverage under the State's group plans for their dependents through COBRA for a maximum of 24 months. The employee shall complete the Military Leave of Absence Exceeds 30 days form to designate continuation or to waive coverage.
The employee's Life and LTD insurance terminates on the date the employee reports for active duty that exceeds 30 days.

# Death of an Active Employee

## Life Insurance Benefits

The State of Iowa provides $20,000 ($50,000 for SPOC) of term life insurance for employees working 30 or more hours per week. The employee may also have elected additional supplemental life insurance coverage. The employee's HRA can tell the beneficiar(ies) the amount of supplemental insurance elected, if any. The HRA will complete the employer section of the Group Life Insurance Claim form and give a Beneficiary Statement to each beneficiary.

Each beneficiary completes the form showing their current address(es), date(s) of birth, and Social Security Number(s). The completed Beneficiary Statement is returned to the HRA. The HRA will submit the entire claim, including a copy of the death certificate, to DAS-HRE for submission to the life insurance carrier.

## Accidental Dismemberment Benefit

Certain losses of sight, speech, limbs, or fingers may be covered by the Accidental Dismemberment benefit. If you have a qualifying loss, your HRA will provide you with the forms that both you and your attending physician must complete. The completed forms are returned to the HRA. The HRA will submit the entire claim to DAS-HRE for submission to the life insurance carrier.

## Health and Dental Insurance

Health and dental insurance will continue through the end of the month in which an active employee dies. The family members who were covered by the health and dental plans will be sent COBRA continuation information within two weeks of the decedent's last pay check. Family members may be eligible for COBRA up to a maximum of 36 months. Email cobra@das.iowa.gov for assistance.

## Deferred Compensation

If the decedent was a participant in the state's deferred compensation program (Retirement Investors' Club or RIC), the beneficiary should contact a RIC team at ric@das.iowa.gov or 866-460-4692 for additional information.

## Workers' Compensation Benefits

In the event of death due to an injury or illness covered under Workers' Compensation, please direct any questions regarding Workers' Compensation benefits to the Iowa Department of Administrative Services Workers' Compensation Coordinator at (515) 414-6212.

## Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

If the decedent has funds remaining in a health or dependent care FSA, the options depend on whether the funds are in the health FSA or dependent care FSA.

For health FSA, a spouse or eligible dependent may continue to incur eligible expenses up to the end of the month in which the decedent had coverage. Claims may be filed through April 15 of the following year. A spouse or eligible dependent may continue coverage in the health FSA under FSA COBRA provided through the vendor ASIFlex. Continuation is only available if on the date of the employee's death, the remaining potential annual benefits under the health FSA are greater than the remaining contributions. Contributions to the health FSA under FSA COBRA are made on a post-tax basis. For the dependent care FSA, the decedent's spouse, one of the decedent's dependents, or a representative of the decedent's estate may submit claims for eligible expenses or benefits for the remainder of the plan year or until the account balance is exhausted. Contact the FSA Program Administrator at fsa@das.iowa.gov if you have questions.

## Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS)

Call 800-622-3849 for assistance.

## Peace Officers' Retirement System (POR)

If a peace officer employed by the Iowa Department of Public Safety is eligible, the POR may provide a death benefit. The benefits specialist can provide information most appropriate for the situation. Contact your HRA for assistance.

## Social Security Survivor Benefits

Contact the Social Security Administration at 800-772-1213 for information regarding eligible survivors' benefits.

# Death of a Former Employee

The following information explains the benefits process in the event of the death of a former employee on LTD. Refer to the previous section, "Death of an Active Employee" for information on deferred compensation, pension plans (IPERS or POR) and Social Security.

## Life Insurance Benefits

Contact an Iowa Department of Administrative Services representative at claimsltdlife@das.iowa.gov. The representative will complete the employer section of the Group Life Insurance Claim form and send a Beneficiary Statement to each beneficiary.
The completed Beneficiary Statement(s) and a death certificate should be submitted to:
Iowa Department of Administrative Services
Attn: Group Life Insurance
Hoover State Office Building, Level A
1305 E. Walnut St
Des Moines, IA 50319-0150

## Survivor Income Benefit

The LTD carrier will pay a Survivor Income Benefit to an eligible survivor upon receiving proof of the individual's death. The Survivor Income Benefit is equal to 3 months of gross disability benefit payments minus any overpayment that may exist on the claim. The Standard must receive satisfactory proof for survivor income benefits within 1 year of the date of the individual's death. The survivor income benefit will only be paid:
1) To the surviving spouse;or
2) If no surviving spouse, in equal shares to the individual's surviving children who are under the age of 25 and primarily depend on the LTD claimant for support and maintenance. If there is no surviving spouse or surviving children under the age of 25, no benefit will be paid.
Contact the Iowa Department of Administrative Services at claimsltdlife@das.iowa.gov for assistance.

## Health and Dental Insurance

Health and dental insurance will continue through the end of the month in which an LTD claimant dies. Family members who were covered by the decedent's group plan are eligible for COBRA for up to 36 months. In addition, a surviving spouse may be eligible for health and dental insurance continuation in the retired/disabled "direct pay" group if the former employee was drawing an IPERS monthly pension benefit. Contact the Iowa Department of Administrative Services at claimsltdlife@das.iowa.gov for assistance.

# Additional Resources

- Managing Your Leaves of Absence
- Long-Term Disability (LTD) Insurance
- COBRA Benefits
- Workers' Compensation
- Employee Benefits Overview
- Iowa Retirement Investors' Club (RIC)
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

