

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS
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Definitions

Family

For the purposes of state personal, state sick, and local sick leave, the term "immediate family" shall include:

1. Spouse.
2. Son or daughter, including a biological, adopted, or foster child, a son- or daughter-in-law, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee stands in *loco parentis*.
3. Parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, or other individual who stands in *loco parentis* to the employee.
4. Sibling, stepsibling, sibling-in-law.
5. Grandparent and grandchild.
6. Any person who may be residing in the employee's household at the time of illness or death.

Family Emergency

The term "family emergency" shall be limited to natural disasters and life-threatening situations involving the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family.

Use of Leave

Effective July 1, 2000, when an employee is absent because of illness, he or she shall be allowed to choose the type of leave to be deducted from the following:

1. Local sick leave.
2. State sick leave.
3. State personal leave.

State Sick Leave

Until May 30, 1995, an employee could earn a maximum of five days per year as state sick leave with no limit on the number of days that could be accrued or transferred from one district to another. Effective May 31, 1995, state sick leave ceased to exist and was replaced by state personal leave. State sick leave earned prior to May 30, 1995, shall remain intact.

State Personal Leave

A state minimum personal leave program, consisting of five days per year of personal leave with no limit on accumulation, shall be provided for District employees. Both state personal leave and state sick leave shall be transferrable from one district to another district. The Board may adopt a policy governing an employee's use of personal leave.

State and Local Leave

Each regular full-time employee in a scheduled position shall earn leave for approved absences at the rate of one day per month for the number of months of duty on an annual basis, according to his or her contract or condition of employment. This accrual rate shall

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include state personal leave that is based on one-half day for every 18 workdays, up to five days per year.

Campus supervisors shall have the authority to place limitations on the number of instructional staff members who request state personal leave on the same workday. The use of state personal leave is governed by Education Code 22.003.

The accumulation of state sick leave, state personal leave, and local sick leave shall be computed annually, based on continuous employment. Once an employee has amassed state and/or local leave equal to one-half of the total annual working days according to his or her contract or condition of employment, local leave shall no longer be accumulated. Previously earned state sick leave and state personal leave may be accumulated indefinitely.

Leave may be used as it accrues on a monthly basis. However, an advance may be allowed for the current year's leave. When an employee ceases to be employed by the District, if that employee has used more leave than he or she has earned, the District shall deduct the cost of used unearned leave days from the employee's final paycheck.

Workday

A "workday" for purposes of accumulation, use, or recording shall mean the number of hours per day associated with the employee's usual work assignment, whether full-time or part-time.

**State Personal Leave
for Hourly
Employees Less
Than 40 Hours**

All hourly position employees not working a scheduled 40-hour week shall earn state leave for approved absences at the rate of one workday per 33 working days of employment, a maximum of five days per year.

Uses of Local Leave

According to conditions stated in this policy, local leave may be used for personal illness, illness or death in the family, and adoption of infants.

Employees shall be charged state personal leave, state sick leave, or local sick leave as used, even if a substitute is not employed. Sick leave shall not be approved for more workdays than have been accumulated in prior years plus those to be earned during the current year.

With exceptions to the use of family and medical leave noted elsewhere in this policy, sick days shall be recorded in whole workdays and half workdays only.

Any other leaves granted or days of absence shall result in a deduction of the daily rate of pay for each day of absence, unless otherwise provided. [See DMD]

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State Personal Leave In accordance with Education Code 22.003, employees shall be allowed to use state personal days (transferable among districts) for personal business reasons. Due to the requirement to successfully administer certain state-mandated tests, attend required trainings, and successfully manage the classrooms, personnel are discouraged from taking personal business leave on state-mandated test days, on District-approved staff development days, during the first or last five days of the semester, or on the school day preceding or following a District, state, or national holiday, except in the case of illness of an employee. Pre-notification of taking leave for personal business reasons must be given to the supervisor/principal, and the supervisor/principal must approve any taking of personal business leave on a state-mandated test day, on District-approved staff development days, during the first or last five days of the semester, or on the school day preceding or following a District, state, or national holiday, except in the case of illness of an employee.

State personal leave shall accumulate without limit and may be transferred, as with state sick leave, from district to district. State sick leave accumulated prior to May 30, 1995, shall be retained as sick leave and shall only be used for employee or family illness, emergency, or death. State sick leave earned before May 30, 1995, shall be carried as a separate leave balance and shall not be included with state personal leave days. However, state sick leave shall no longer be earned after May 30, 1995. The District retains the option of whether to continue awarding local sick leave. Local sick leave shall not be transferable.

Family and Medical Leave For purposes of an employee's entitlement to Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave, the 12-month period shall be a rolling 12-month period measured backward from the date an employee uses FMLA leave.

Twelve weeks of unpaid leave for the birth of a child; adoption or placement of a child; serious health condition of a child, spouse, parent; or personal illness shall be provided if the employee has worked at least one year and has provided a minimum of 1,250 hours of service to the District. Family and medical leave may run concurrently with temporary disability or workers' compensation leave. Use of paid leave may be required.

Concurrent Use of Leave The District shall require employees to use family and medical leave concurrently with paid leave and with temporary disability leave, if applicable.

Combined Leave for Spouses If both spouses are employed by the District, combined family and medical leave for the birth, adoption, or placement of a child, or to care for a parent with a serious health condition shall be limited to

a combined total of 12 weeks as determined by the needs of the District.

Serious Health Conditions

The following must be taken into consideration with respect to family and medical leave regulations:

1. Absence must involve a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive days. Incapacity is the inability to work, attend school, or perform other regular daily activities because of a serious health condition, related treatment, or recovery. Subsequent treatment or incapacity relating to that same condition would also be included.
2. Chronic conditions may qualify as serious health conditions, even when the individual episodes of incapacity are not more than three days in duration. For example, asthma and diabetes that continue over an extended period would qualify, even though they may not necessarily require a visit to a health-care provider.
3. The definition is expanded to address health conditions that are not ordinarily incapacitating but for which treatments are being given because the conditions would likely result in an absence of more than three consecutive calendar days without medical intervention or treatment (i.e., chemotherapy or radiation treatment for cancer, dialysis for kidney disease, physical therapy for severe arthritis, or multiple treatments for restorative surgery after an accident or injury).
4. The common cold, the flu, earaches, upset stomach, minor ulcers, headaches other than migraines, routine dental or orthodontic problems, and periodontal disease are not ordinarily serious health conditions. These conditions may become a serious health condition if complications arise.
5. Substance abuse may be a serious health condition, and leave may only be taken for treatment. Absence because of the employee's use of the substance, rather than for treatment, shall not apply.

Health-Care Provider

The term "health-care provider" includes social workers and any health-care provider recognized by the employer or accepted by the employer's health plan, including any provider who practices in a country other than the United States and is authorized to practice in accordance with the laws of that country.

Medical Certification

An Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) form may be obtained from the District's human resources department. The employer shall not have direct contact with an employee's health-care provider or request additional information if an employee on or

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requesting family and medical leave submits a complete certification signed by a health-care provider. A health-care provider representing the employer may contact the employee's health-care provider for purposes of clarification and authentication of the medical certification with the employee's permission. If the leave is also workers' compensation leave, the provision of the workers' compensation statute that permits the employer to have direct contact with the health-care provider may be followed.

Adoption or Foster Care

Employers are required to grant family and medical leave before actual placement or adoption if an absence is required for the process to proceed. Attending counseling sessions, appearing in court, consulting with an attorney or doctor, or attending a physical examination are examples of this guideline.

Notification and Response to Request for FMLA Leave

Within five business days of receiving a request for leave, the District shall provide timely notice of the employee's specific rights and obligations. This notice must be given on the first occasion that the employee requests family and medical leave in a six-month period and must be given in the language in which the employee is literate.

The District must notify employees if paid leave shall be counted as family and medical leave within five business days of receiving a request for leave. Notice may be oral or in writing. If oral notice of the requirement to use paid leave is given, it must be followed by written confirmation no later than the following payday.

Failure to respond to an employee's request for leave shall result in the employee not being accountable for complying with requirements for eligibility, advance notice, medication certification, fitness for duty reports, and the like.

Leave Designation

Leave may only be designated as family and medical leave after the employee returns to work if one of the following two circumstances applies:

1. If leave has provisionally been designated as family and medical leave while awaiting receipt of a medical certification or other reasonable documentation; or
2. If the District learns that the reason the employee was out was for a FMLA-qualifying event after he or she has returned to work. Designation as family and medical leave must occur within five business days.

Note: An employee cannot assert family and medical leave protection for absence if notice has not been given within two business days of return to work.

**Continuation of
Group Health
Benefits**

The District must provide the employee with written notice that the health insurance premiums payment was not received. Notice must be sent 15 days before dropping the employee from the group health coverage.

Intermittent Leave

Intermittent leave may include leave of periods from an hour or more to several weeks. Leave on an occasional basis for medical appointments or taken several days at a time spread over a period of six months, such as for chemotherapy, pregnancy-related physical or prenatal examinations, or periods of severe morning sickness, are examples of intermittent leave.

The increment of leave taken has to be counted in a period of one hour or less, and the employee cannot be required to take more leave than necessary to address a need unless it is done under end-of-term exceptions. For example, an employee cannot be required to take family and medical leave in half-day increments if only one hour is required.

When leave is taken after the birth of a healthy child or placement of a healthy child for adoption or foster care, an employee may not take leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule.

**FMLA and Workers'
Compensation**

Workers' compensation absences and family and medical leave may run concurrently as long as a proper notice and designation by the District occurs.

An employee absent because of a job-related injury or illness shall be assigned to family and medical leave, if applicable.

**Workers'
Compensation**

An employee eligible for workers' compensation wage benefits and not on assault leave shall indicate whether he or she chooses to:

1. Receive workers' compensation wage benefits; or
2. Use available paid leave. Workers' compensation wage benefits shall begin when:
 - a. Paid leave is exhausted;
 - b. The employee elects to discontinue use of paid leave; or
 - c. Leave payments are less than the employee's pre-injury average weekly wage.

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An employee shall not be prevented from accepting a light-duty assignment while recovering from a serious health condition. Acceptance must be voluntary, uncoerced, and shall not be a condition of employment. The employee's right to restoration to the same or equivalent position shall be available until 12 weeks have passed, including family and medical leave and the period of light duty. Family and medical leave protection shall end after 12 weeks, and any relief or protection shall then fall under the workers' compensation statute or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The District may offer an employee a light-duty position when the health-care provider certifies that the employee is able to return to a light-duty assignment. The employee shall be permitted, but shall not be required, to accept the position. Refusal of light duty may result in loss of workers' compensation benefits.

Medical Release The employee's request for reinstatement shall be accompanied by medical certification of the employee's ability to perform essential job functions.

Teacher Reinstatement A teacher desiring to return to work at or near the conclusion of a semester shall be reinstated in accordance with the END-OF-TERM LEAVE section in DEC(LEGAL).

Resignation If, at the expiration of the family and medical leave, the employee is able to return to work but chooses not to do so, the District shall require reimbursement of the employee benefits contribution made by the District during the period in which such leave was taken as unpaid leave.

Bereavement (Funeral) Leave Approved leave for death in the immediate family shall not be for more than five workdays for each occurrence, subject to the approval of the District.

An employee may use three days of local leave in the case of a death of a second degree relative. A second degree relative is defined as an uncle, aunt, nephew, or first cousin. Any of the above relationships, where applicable, may be through either consanguinity or affinity.

Assault Leave Payments While on District-approved assault leave to recuperate from physical injuries sustained in an assault during performance of regular duties, an employee shall continue to receive pay at the rate earned prior to the assault, and the employee shall not be charged accrued leave. Payments must be coordinated with workers' compensation benefits.

Temporary Disability Leave The maximum length of temporary disability leave for educators shall be 180 calendar days.

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Annual Report	At the end of each school year, an analytical report of the utilization of benefits provided for in this policy shall be made to the Board.
Civic Leave	Leave without loss of pay shall be granted to an employee to perform essential civic duties, which shall include service as an election judge. Prior notice must be given to the supervisor/principal. Any compensation for this service shall be retained by the employee.
Compliance with Subpoena	The District shall not discharge, discipline, or otherwise penalize an employee because the employee complies with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administering proceeding.
Leave to Perform Public Duty	District employees shall be encouraged to participate in local governmental affairs. Accordingly, all regular full-time employees in scheduled positions and all hourly employees working a scheduled 40-hour week who hold an elected local public office shall be entitled to up to five days annually to perform the duties of said public office.
Special Leave from Duty to Attend a College Class for Classified Staff	<p>An hourly staff member may be granted leave from duty for up to three working hours a week to pursue college classes leading to teacher certification, subject to the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The class to be attended must only be offered during the workday.2. Approval must be granted by both the supervisor and assistant superintendent on the appropriate form in DEC(EX-HIBIT).3. The employee must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 or more.4. Approval shall be for only one class per semester.5. The employee shall make up the granted leave from duty either through the use of accumulated compensatory time or through hours worked outside of the normal duty schedule, subject to approval in advance by the supervisor. The time shall be made up in the week it was taken.
Sabbatical	<p>Any District employee may be granted a leave of absence from assigned duty for professional study, subject to the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. For five years of service with the District, a one-year leave of absence may be granted.

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2. Upon return, reinstatement shall be made of accrued sick leave benefits.
3. Reassignment, if available, shall be made to the same position held at the time leave was granted.
4. A second leave under this policy may be granted after an additional eight years of service.

Special Leave of Absence

Any District employee may be granted a one-year special leave of absence. Each request shall be considered on a case-by-case basis following application stating the nature of the leave and purposes for which leave is requested. If the request for leave is granted, it shall be subject to the conditions listed above for sabbatical leave.

By March 1 of the year of leave, the employee on leave must state in written form intentions to return to the system. Such statements must be sent by certified mail with a return receipt requested in order to prevent misunderstandings. Failure to do this shall result in forfeiture of the right of reemployment. The employee shall return to the position to which he or she was assigned at the time of the leave of absence, if a position is available. Otherwise, the employee shall be considered an excess employee with placement at another District location.

Administrative Leave

The Superintendent may grant administrative leave with pay to any full-time employee who is employed under either a probationary, term, or continuing contract. Such leave may be for such reasons and shall be for such a period of time as is determined at the discretion of the Superintendent but shall in no event exceed the remainder of any school year of the affected employee for which such leave is granted.

Unauthorized Absence

Payroll deductions for each day, or part of a day, of unauthorized absence from duty shall be made according to the daily rate of pay.

An unauthorized absence shall be defined as an absence from the assigned duty not covered by policy codes DEC, DMD, or leave authorized by the administrator in charge.

Unpaid Leave

The District may fill any vacancy created by an employee's unpaid leave of absence by employing a temporary or permanent replacement, depending on the needs of the District and the employee's medical prognosis. When the employee is not otherwise covered by the temporary disability leave provisions of Education Code 21.409 or the FMLA, he or she shall be considered for the first position for which he or she is qualified that becomes available after the employee is able to return to work.

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**Religious
Observances**

The District shall reasonably accommodate an employee's request to be absent from duty in order to participate in religious observances and practices, so long as it does not cause undue hardship on District business. Such absence shall be without pay unless local, applicable, paid local leave is available. *42 U.S.C. 2000e(j), 2000e-2-2(a); Ansonia Bd. of Education v. Philbrook, 107 S. Ct. 367 (1986); Pinsker v. Joint Dist. No. 28J of Adams and Arapahoe Counties, 735 F. 2d 388 (10th Cir. 1984)*

Military Leave Short-Term

All employees of the District who are members of the state military forces shall be granted a leave of absence from their duties without loss of time, efficiency rating, vacation time, or salary on all days during which they are engaged in authorized training or duty ordered or authorized by proper authority, not to exceed 15 days in a federal fiscal year.

Military Leave Long-Term

Any employee, other than a temporary employee, who leaves his or her position for the purpose of entering into active duty with the regular or reserve Armed Forces of the United States, the Texas National Guard, or the Texas State Guard, if discharged, separated, or released from such active duty under honorable conditions within five years from the date of enlistment or call to active service, shall be restored to employment in the same position held at the time of entering into active service or to a position of like seniority, status, and pay if the employee is still physically and mentally qualified to perform the duties of such position.

Other terms and conditions of military leave must also be in compliance with DEC(LEGAL).

**Frequent or
Prolonged Absence**

All absences in excess of ten days shall be monitored by the immediate supervisor, who shall take appropriate action as required by District guidelines.

All employee absences in excess of ten days within a school year shall be reported to the Superintendent or designee, who shall take appropriate action as is deemed necessary.

An employee working in a position that requires use of the District's automated online and/or telephonic absence reporting system must use the system to report all absences. In addition, an employee absent three or more days in a contract year must make personal phone contact with his or her immediate supervisor upon the third day of absence and each subsequent absence thereafter during the school year.

An employee absent five or more consecutive workdays because of personal illness shall submit a medical certification of illness and of his or her fitness to return to work. An employee absent five or

more consecutive workdays due to illness in the immediate family shall present medical certification of the family member's illness.

Sanctions for Abuse

All employee leave is provided for the specific purpose stipulated in this policy. It is not intended to be used as a vacation or for mere convenience. Except for discretionary state personal leave, documentation may be required for any absence at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee. Abuse of the employee leave program is a violation of District policy and may result in disciplinary action up to and including loss of pay, suspension, demotion, or termination of employment, in accordance with appropriate District policies.

Accrued Leave Benefits

Accrued leave benefits shall be calculated using state and local leave accumulated as an employee of the District. Upon retirement with a minimum of five years, or resignation after completing 20 years, of employment with the District, an employee shall be eligible for accrued leave benefits under the following conditions:

1. Hourly position employees not working a scheduled 40-hour week are not eligible to be paid for accrued leave.
2. Any employee not mentioned above who retires after completing five consecutive years or resigns after completing 20 years of service with the District shall be paid for accrued leave. Accrued leave shall be computed at one-half the daily rate at the time of retirement or resignation times the number of accrued leave days, which shall not exceed one-half the number of working days in an annual contract. In order to receive payment for unused leave, retirement must occur at the end of the employee's contract or work year, or when retirement is necessitated by a medical disability as approved by the Teacher Retirement System (TRS). Exceptions must receive approval from the Superintendent.
3. No benefits shall be calculated on a salary schedule exceeding that of a regular teacher's salary schedule.

Upon the death of an employee, these benefits shall be payable to his or her heirs.

Sick Leave Fund

Purpose

The District maintains a sick leave fund to assist employees who have exhausted all accumulated leave days when burdened with a catastrophic illness or catastrophic injury. Employees may be granted use of contributed sick leave fund days as set forth in this policy.

Definition of Sick Leave Days

Sick leave days from the fund are those days granted to an employee who, as a result of a catastrophic illness or catastrophic in-

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jury, is unable to perform the duties of his or her position. For purposes of this policy, catastrophic illness or catastrophic injury means any illness or injury that creates a substantial risk of death or that causes death, serious permanent disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ.

Family Members

Sick leave days for immediate family members may be granted for a catastrophic illness or catastrophic injury of a family member (spouse, children, mother, father).

Applicant's Criteria

A full-time employee who has worked for the District for a minimum of 12 consecutive months and has applied for family and medical leave shall be eligible. This includes regular hourly wage employees, excluding substitutes. **Employees may not request days for absences due to a Worker Compensation injury or illness.**

Employees who submit an application to the sick leave fund must be in danger of exhausting all accumulated leave days, including local sick leave days, state leave days, vacation days, and compensatory days.

The applicant must submit an official District application requesting additional sick leave days up to a maximum of 30 days.

Under very extenuating circumstances, an employee may request up to an additional 30 days.

An employee shall not receive more than 30 days (an extra 30 days in extenuating situations) of contributed sick leave in a 12-month period.

Donor's Criteria

Prospective donors must have worked for the District a minimum of 12 months.

Donors may contribute only earned local sick leave. While the District allows an employee to use days in advance for the current year for his or her own family illness, an employee shall not contribute such a day to others.

An employee may donate only one day at a time per applicant. Only two donations may be made by an employee in a fiscal year.

Donors shall come from the applicant's campus or department. In an area not large enough to support the request for extra sick leave days, or when not enough days are contributed, other campuses and departments may make contributions.

Procedures for the Sick Leave Fund

An employee in danger of exhausting all accumulated sick leave personal days, vacation, and compensatory time shall obtain an application from his or her campus or department secretary. The

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application shall be submitted to the assistant superintendent of human resources or designee, who shall forward the application to the Ector County ISD (ECISD) sick leave fund (SLF) board.

The SLF board may meet on a monthly basis or as needed (August–May), on the second Thursday of each month. The board shall review applications and notify the applicants that the requests have been approved or denied. A maximum of 30 days may be approved for applicants who meet the qualifications.

The applicant's administrator shall offer the staff at the applicant's campus or department the opportunity to contribute a day of local sick leave for the applicant's use. The campus or department shall keep a log of the employees donating days in the order in which they are received. A copy of this list shall be given to the department of human resources.

The donating employee's leave shall be adjusted at the time the day is used. If there are days not used by the recipient, those days shall not be deducted. The unused days shall not be the property of the recipient.

In the event that the campus or department is not large enough to support the request for extra sick leave days, or when an insufficient number of days are contributed, other campuses and departments may make contributions. The administrator at the applicant's campus or department shall notify human resources, which shall notify other campuses of the need.

If the days are being donated by employees from other campuses, the list of days donated shall be kept at the applicant's campus or department. As the days are used, the home campus/department shall notify the donor's campus that the donated days have been used.

**Governing
Committee**

The governing committee, which shall approve or reject all requests for sick leave fund days, shall be called the ECISD SLF board.

Slf Board

The SLF board shall be composed of 13 elected members and an assistant superintendent or designee, who shall be an ex officio member with no vote. To be eligible for the SLF board, an employee must have been employed by the District for at least five years prior to the election. This restriction shall not apply to the ex officio nonvoting member appointed by the Superintendent.

Distribution of membership among the various entities in the District shall be:

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1. Four representatives from elementary campuses (certified, nonadministrative positions).
2. Four representatives from secondary campuses (certified, nonadministrative positions).
3. One campus-level administrator.
4. One representative from central administration.
5. One nonadministrative representative from support services (custodial, transportation, food service, maintenance).
6. Two paraprofessional representatives (secretaries, clerks, aides).
7. The assistant superintendent of human resources or designee, who shall serve as a nonvoting member of the board, voting only in case of a tie.
8. The director of payroll, who shall serve as an ex officio member of the board.

Term of Office

Term of office guidelines for the SLF board are as follows:

1. A member of the SLF board shall serve for two years, beginning August 1 and ending July 31. A person may serve on the SLF board no more than a total of two complete terms.
2. To establish continuity on the SLF board, the term of office for six of the members of the original SLF board shall expire July 31, 2007. The term of office for the other seven members shall expire July 31, 2008. Length of terms shall be decided by a drawing at the first SLF board meeting following the first election.

Election of Slf Board

Election procedures for the SLF board are as follows:

1. The assistant superintendent of human resources or designee shall notify all employees of open filing for positions of the SLF board by April 15. Filing forms shall be provided with a filing deadline of five working days.
2. Elections shall be held by May 1.
3. Every employee shall be eligible to vote for his or her representative(s).
4. The SLF board shall count the ballots for all positions.
5. In the event that no one files as a candidate for one or more of the positions on the board, the SLF board shall fill such po-

sitions by appointments at the first SLF board meeting following the filing deadline. The selection shall be made from the group that would be represented by the vacant position.

6. In the event of a resignation, the SLF board shall appoint a person from the appropriate group to fill the unexpired term.

**Duties and
Responsibilities**

Duties and responsibilities of the SLF board shall include the following:

1. The assistant superintendent of human resources or designee shall serve as chairperson.
2. At the first meeting of the year for the newly elected SLF board members, the SLF board shall select from among its members a vice chairperson and a secretary.
3. Applications for use of the sick leave fund shall be reviewed individually at a called meeting. A quorum shall consist of at least seven members. The SLF board shall determine the number of days approved up to 30 days and shall reserve the right to approve, disapprove, or modify the days requested. Members present shall sign in, and minutes shall be kept of each board meeting. A recording of a motion and vote shall be kept on file. HIPPA requirements must be observed. Only the name of the employee and not the illness or injury shall be recorded. The board shall not be required to state a reason for or against the request.
4. An applicant may appeal the decision of the SLF board by requesting in writing, within five working days, to appear in person before the SLF board.
5. The decision of the SLF board regarding the appeal shall be final.