

Caring for the Caregivers

We in the Leadership Board of Mountain States Mennonite Conference believe that it's vitally important to care for our pastors who do such a wonderful job of caring for us. We especially want to support pastors and staff when they are in the vulnerable place of caring for a newborn child, caring for an adopted or foster child, when they are themselves ill, or when their family member is ill. To that end, we're releasing a statement of guidance for churches that we recommend they follow beginning July 2020; and we as MSMC will take the lead by adopting this for all conference staff. This policy is based upon the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), but it allows for job-protected paid leave rather than job-protected unpaid leave.

The statement is as follows and will be posted to the MSMC Web site under Resources/ Conference

Documents: <https://mountainstatesmc.org/resources/conference-documents/>

Family and Medical Leave Policy Mountain States Mennonite Conference

We believe that paid parental leave has a significant positive effect on the health of children and families, including reducing the likelihood of infant mortality and maternal postpartum depression.* Therefore, it is in the best interest of both the employee and the congregation to offer more than the minimum 12 weeks of unpaid leave required by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

We recommend that the congregation grant paid job-protected maternity and paternity leave of 12 weeks to care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption, or foster care. We also recommend that this policy apply to employees caring for immediate family members (spouse, child, parent, or parent-in-law) with a serious health condition or to take medical leave when the employee is unable to work because of their own serious health condition.

By their mutual agreement, the congregation may grant paid leave based upon accumulated health leave and/or accumulated vacation time, or regardless of whether there is accumulated health leave and/or accumulated vacation time.

The congregation should also maintain health care coverage and retirement benefits during this leave. It is understood that the pastor will assist the congregation in planning for the needed interim ministry required during the leave.

These guidelines apply to all pastors and staff employed in Mountain States Mennonite Conference, regardless of whether the employee's status is full-time or less than full-time.

***Paid parental leave during the postpartum period can reduce infant mortality by as much as 10%, according to a 2011 study, and can reduce the chance of maternal postpartum depression. Paid leave has been linked to a longer duration of breastfeeding, which lowers the risk of asthma, obesity, and sudden infant death syndrome for babies. The United States is the only industrialized country in the world that does not guarantee paid parental leave. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/29/health/paid-leave-benefits-to-children-research/index.html>**

For questions or concerns about this recommended policy, please contact Leadership Board Members Amy Zimbelman: amyszimbelman@gmail.com or Darren Knowles: knowles.darrend@gmail.com