



Manager's Guide for Family Leave Transitions

When a member of your team is preparing to go on leave for the birth or adoption of a child, devoting time and effort to planning for their leave will increase the likelihood of a smooth transition and appropriate coverage of job responsibilities. Helping an employee prepare for leave and the transition back to work are also critical to that employee's retention and productivity once back at work.

Crimson Cares

including

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This resource was developed by WFD Consulting for the Harvard University Office of Work/Life Resources, Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences Human Resources, and Harvard School of Public Health Human Resources.

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Good preparation and planning ahead will lead to decreased stress levels for all involved.

Begin the planning process about two months before the employee goes on leave (or at a time you and the employee agree to), allowing for issues and questions to be addressed well before the employee's leave begins.

- Familiarize yourself with Harvard University's Family Leave Policies, including the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). http://harvie.harvard.edu/docroot/standalone/Policies_Contracts/Staff_Personnel_Manual/Section8/Leave.shtml.
- Work with your Human Resources Consultant, consulting them early in the process and, as necessary, throughout the employee's leave and return to work.
- Contact the FAS Work/Life Consultant, Ronnie Mae Weiss, rweiss@fas.harvard.edu, 617-495-4275 with questions.
- Contact Harvard's EAP (877-327-4278) for a management consultation if you feel worried or uncomfortable about any aspect of this transition.
- Suggest your employee read the *Preparing for Family Leave and Returning to Work* section, review the *Work Responsibilities Coverage Form* and meet with the FAS Work/Life Consultant, Ronnie Mae Weiss, rweiss@fas.harvard.edu or 617-495-4275 before you meet. If possible, base your conversations with the employee on information contained on that form.

Meeting with the employee

If possible, use the *Work Responsibilities Coverage Form* as a basis for your discussion.

Clarify the employee's expectations regarding when the leave will begin and when he/she anticipates returning from leave.

Discuss the employee's accessibility during leave

- Will he/she be checking e-mail and/or voice-mail?
- Does he/she want to be informed of significant events in the office?
- Are there meetings that he/she will want to call in to or attend in person?
- Are there social events he/she would like to be included in (holiday party, retirement party, etc.)?

Encourage your employee to be realistic about how connected to work he/she will be during leave. Be clear about your understanding that the employee will be on leave, not working from home, and emphasize your flexibility given that accessibility may vary from what is anticipated.

If the employee is interested in a phased return to work (i.e., returning to work part-time) and this is a possibility, discuss the details of the Flexible Work Arrangement and direct the employee to http://harvie.harvard.edu/Work_Life_Balance/Flexible_Work/ so that he/she may complete the necessary documentation in advance of his/her return. Consult your Human Resources Consultant or the FAS Work/Life Consultant as needed.

Distributing the employee's job responsibilities

When you review the employee's *Work Responsibilities Coverage Form*, consider all of the tasks and projects listed and who might best take over these responsibilities during the employee's leave.

- Ask the employee going on leave for ideas about colleagues/subordinates who might be appropriate for temporarily taking on his/her responsibilities. He/she may have some ideas given his/her knowledge of the tasks involved.
- On the *Work Responsibilities Coverage Form*, complete what you can in the Person(s) Covering Work during Leave column, leaving blank what is still to be decided.
- Think about developmental opportunities for current employees – are there job responsibilities of the person going on leave that could be given to other employees to increase their skill sets?
- Check with other managers about employees who may be interested in taking on additional responsibilities. Consider utilization levels, workload, and potentially conflicting priorities.
- Consult your Human Resources Consultant, as appropriate, for ideas of other employees who might be interested and qualified to take on some of the responsibilities requiring coverage.
- Consider what might be postponed until the employee returns from leave.
- Determine if hiring a temporary employee will be necessary.

This planning process should decrease the likelihood that you (the manager) will be responsible for an unreasonable amount of work while the employee is on leave.

Helping the employee transition back to work

- Look at the employee's *Work Responsibilities Coverage Form* periodically while he/she is on leave and fill in status updates so it will be easier to get the employee back up to speed upon his/her return.
- Invite the employee to participate in calls prior to his/her return, with the understanding that he/she may decline the invitation but may welcome the opportunity to begin getting involved with work again.
- When making staffing decisions for future projects, consider the employee who is on leave in order to weave him/her back into the work flow.
- Schedule a call prior to the employee's scheduled return to work date, to check in and start the re-entry process.
- Speak with the staff who have taken responsibility for the employee's work during his/her leave.

It's important that the transition at the end of the leave is smooth for these people as well, and that their efforts are recognized and appreciated.

Facilitating a smooth transition will support productive, positive working conditions moving forward.

- If the employee is returning to work on a Flexible Work Arrangement, confirm that all necessary documentation has been completed, approved and submitted.

Harvard's Work/Life Resources

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FAS Human Resources
<http://www.hr.fas.harvard.edu>

Harvard Office of Work/Life Resources
http://harvie.harvard.edu/Work_Life_Balance/

Harvard's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
<https://harvardeap.personaladvantage.com/articles>