

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva

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To/à: All Staff Members at Headquarters and in the Field
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Division of Resource Management
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Subject/objet: Paternity Leave

(To be inserted in SAMM Chapter 6 as Ref. Doc. 6-014)

1. The purpose of this IOMFOM is to inform staff of new and improved provisions governing Paternity Leave. These provisions were the subject of interagency consultations and recent deliberations by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) which unanimously recommended them to the High Commissioner for approval and immediate implementation.

2. Until now, Paternity Leave has been granted under other leave entitlements, such as shown below:

- where both parents are staff members in the UN common system, as shared maternity leave entitlement (up to four weeks of the post-natal leave unused by the mother)
- family leave (under uncertified sick leave)
- annual leave
- special leave without pay
- adoption Leave

In addition to the new Paternity Leave provisions, the above options will continue to apply.

3. The new provisions on Paternity Leave are introduced to more closely align to the policy on Adoption Leave (which remains unchanged), and in furtherance of gender equity and a family supportive work environment. These provisions and the procedures for requesting Paternity Leave are set out below and enter into force with immediate effect. A staff member who has had a child born recently may benefit from these provisions provided leave is taken and completed before the child is one year old. For

those whose child is less than 8 weeks from its first birthday, any period of less than 8 weeks remaining may be utilised under the new Paternity Leave provisions.

Eligibility

4. Staff members who have completed a minimum of six months' continuous service in UNHCR and hold an indefinite appointment, and Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) and staff on secondment to UNHCR may be granted Paternity Leave on the birth of their child.

5. A minimum of one year must elapse between the end date of one Paternity Leave and the commencement date of the next. Only one period of Paternity and/or Adoption Leave will be granted in a single year.

6. Where both parents are staff members in the UN common system, Paternity Leave will be granted independently of the maternity leave entitlement. The Paternity Leave arrangements do not require that the mother also be a UN staff member, nor that she be the official spouse of the staff member.

Leave arrangements

7. Paternity Leave consists of 8 weeks of paid leave (recorded as Special Leave with Full Pay) which may be taken as one continuous period, or two separate 4-week periods. It may also be taken on the basis of half-time leave combined with half-time duty. In recognition of the different childcare needs of each family, Paternity Leave may be taken anytime during the first year of the life of the child.

8. When Paternity Leave is sought immediately following the birth of a child, the staff member should present a certificate from the attending doctor or midwife indicating the expected delivery date. Requests for post-delivery Paternity Leave should be accompanied, where possible, by the child's birth certificate. However, when this is not possible, it may be authorised pending receipt of the required birth certificate, which must be presented within the first year of the child's birth. Failure to subsequently present a birth certificate will result in the period of SLWFP being converted to annual leave or - in the case that the annual leave balance is insufficient - to SLWOP.

9. While managers and staff are expected to consult and cooperate on the timing of the Paternity Leave, no request from staff meeting the criteria established should be rejected. To allow managers to plan for the imminent departure of a staff member, requests for Paternity Leave should be made at least one month in advance of the requested date of commencement. Requests should indicate the desired timing and distribution of the leave, i.e. 8 continuous weeks, 16 weeks on part-time basis, or two separate 4-week periods.

10. Headquarters staff should address their request to their supervisor who has the delegated authority to approve and administer Paternity Leave. For staff in the field, the

approval and administration of Paternity Leave will be under the authority of the Head of country-level Office.

Other provisions

11. Paternity Leave is not mandatory, and staff may choose to use it fully, partly or not to use it at all. As indicated earlier, it may be taken in conjunction with or independently of other approved forms of leave such as annual leave, special leave, uncertified sick leave, etc. Such other forms of leave continue to be subject to existing criteria and provisions.

12. Service credits will continue to accrue during the period of Paternity Leave, such as towards sick leave, annual leave, home leave, salary increment, seniority, termination indemnity and repatriation grant, where applicable. However, no sick leave will be granted during that period.