



**City of Seattle Equal Benefits Program
Contractor Compliance Guidelines
Bereavement Leave**

SAMPLE POLICY

Adopting a bereavement leave policy that provides for equal treatment of employees with spouses and employees with domestic partners is an important part of a City contractor's efforts to end discrimination in the workplace.

This document offers sample policy language that includes employees with domestic partners in a bereavement leave policy. This means that when leave is granted because of the death of an employee's spouse or someone related to the spouse (such as a mother-in-law or father-in-law), leave must also be granted because of the death of an employee's domestic partner or someone similarly related to the domestic partner.

A sample bereavement leave policy follows:

In the event of a death in an employee's immediate family, an employee may be granted up to five days of pay for bereavement leave to handle matters related to death and grieving. If additional time is needed, the employee may use accrued vacation or compensatory time and may request an unpaid leave of absence.

"Immediate family" includes the employee's spouse, domestic partner, parents (including step parents, foster parents, parents-in-law and domestic partner's parents), grandparents, siblings, children, children of a domestic partner, step child, adopted child, a child for whom the employee has parenting responsibilities, and a relative or friend who resides with the employee.

In some situations, an employee will request bereavement leave because of the death of someone not covered by the categories listed above. In these situations, some employers use their own discretion to decide whether to allow leave to be taken. An example of discretionary language is:

Bereavement Leave may also be granted because of the death of any other individual. A request for bereavement leave due to the death of any other individual should be submitted to the Human Resources Manager for approval.

For employers who have never formalized their bereavement leave policy, this document also describes some of the different ways in which bereavement leave is offered.

Bereavement leave can be granted with or without pay. Some employers treat bereavement leave as a type of sick leave, paying employees taking leave with available accrued sick pay. Some employers pay employees for bereavement leave by applying other forms of accrued leave, such as personal leave or vacation pay.

Bereavement leave also may be classified as a separate and unique type of leave for which pay will be given.

Regardless of how bereavement leave is categorized, some employers limit the number of days an employee may be absent from work on bereavement leave. Other employers use a policy that pays bereavement leave for a specified period of days but allows additional days of leave to be taken unpaid, or with pay through the use of accrued vacation or compensatory time. In addition, employers often limit the category of people whose death will entitle the employee to take bereavement leave.