

Maternity, Adoption and Parental Leave

Maternity, Adoption and Parental leave provides parents the gift of time to build, grow and strengthen the relationship with their newly born or adopted child, creating unforgettable memories. The following is a guide to maximizing the time spent with your child and how to best utilize benefits UNA has acquired for its members through extensive bargaining. It is our hope this streamlined information will help you accomplish a successful leave, providing you and your child the greatest gift, time. This information is a recommendation of the best course of action for UNA members to maximize the return they receive from their maternity LOA benefits, EI and SUB plan.

The process of utilizing your benefits to get the most out of your LOA does not have to be laborious. Information on the three components required to maximize your return during your LOA are presented in sections: Leave of Absence, Employment Insurance and Supplementary Unemployment Benefit. There is a flow chart for a Maternity Leave of Absence. Each section is colour coded to correspond with coloured squares on the flow map that can help guide you through the process. Remember to keep personal copies of all documentation sent to your manager and the HR Benefits Department. Try scanning and sending stuff through your email so you have a running record of communications. This includes completed benefits, beneficiary or LOA forms, sick notes, and written requests.

the benefit of having benefits

Registered Nurses (RNs) are the cornerstone to continuity of care within our hospitals and communities. Amidst capacity pressures, cost saving strategies, worker shortages and new delivery care models, RNs work tirelessly around the clock to consistently meet the individual needs of all patients and families. It is vital that RNs maintain personal health to uphold their duties at work. UNA has demonstrated success in bargaining for comprehensive health and extended benefits packages leading the way to expanding the well-being of members across Alberta.

Maternity, Parental and Adoption Leave of Absence (LOA)

Maternity Leave is an unpaid LOA which can be up to 18 months. Maternity leave can begin as early as 12 weeks before the **expected** date of delivery but commencing no later than the **actual** date of delivery.

Parental and Adoption Leave is an unpaid leave for up to 18 months when you adopt a child or for parenting duties following the birth of a child.

Unpaid LOA's must be authorized by the employer, be of a specified duration and have a specified return to work date.

To qualify for these unpaid leaves, you must have completed 90 days of employment.

For maternity leave, to commence your leave you must provide the employer at least 2 weeks advance notice where possible.

For adoption leave, as long as you have made the application for leave and it was been approved you can then commence your adoption leave with one (1) day's notice. Make sure to keep your manager updated on the adoption proceedings.

For parental leave, you may commence your leave with one (1) day's notice as long as you have applied for the leave at least 12 weeks prior to the expected date of delivery.

When you are comfortable to share the good news with your manager, provide your manager with a written request for the LOA with estimated date of delivery. They will complete the LOA request form and forward it to Human Resources (HR) Benefits Service Department.

Upon receipt of the LOA form, the HR Benefits Service Department will mail you a Leave Package which will provide an Information Guide and all the relevant forms that need to be completed.

For maternity leave, healthcare benefits (e.g. dental, disability, health etc.) are compulsory during the valid post delivery health period (~ 6-8 weeks). Cost is split and pre-payment through payroll deduction can be arranged if enough notice is given. If payment is not received prior to going on leave and/or arrangements for prepayment have not been made, benefits will be waived following the compulsory portion of the LOA with the outstanding balance recovered from your first paycheck upon returning to work.

For maternity leave, upon completion of the valid post delivery health period (~ 6-8 weeks), benefits become optional. Following the valid health related portion, the next 12 week period is optional and the premium cost share continues for the 12 weeks.

For adoption and parental leave, the first 12 week period is optional and premium cost share continues for this 12 week period.

For the remainder of your LOA you can choose to continue or discontinue the same benefits coverage selected in the 12 week optional period but you will pay 100% of the premiums. Your decision on benefits, once submitted, is final.

Any terminated benefit coverage will be reinstated when you return and are actively at work. To be actively at work you must have returned to your regular duties and hours in your work rotation.

Life, AD&D and Disability coverage are reinstated immediately. Supplementary Health and Dental resume the first of the month following your return.

After your delivery, please advise the HR Contact Centre and your Manager of your date of delivery as soon as possible. Your Record of Employment should then be electronically submitted to Service Canada so you can receive EI benefits.

For adoption and parental leaves, please follow up with your Manager and the HR contact centre after the birth or placement of your child to ensure the Record of Employment is submitted to Service Canada.

HR Contact Centre Information:
Phone: 1- 877-511-4455
Email: hrcontactcentre@albertahealthservices.ca

Employment Insurance (EI) Maternity/Parental Benefits

Must have 600 hours of insurable employment in the last 52 weeks (or the period since the start of your last claim, whichever is shorter) to qualify.

How to know if I'm collecting insurable employment? Check your pay stubs and look for EI premium deductions from your gross income. In 2020, for every \$100 earned the employer will deduct \$1.58 to a maximum of \$856.36 for the entire year.

There are 2 parts to EI benefits: Maternity Benefits and Parental Benefits. Maternity Benefits can be directly followed by Parental Benefits and you can apply for both at once.

What are Maternity Benefits? Maternity benefits are only available to the person who is away from work because they are pregnant or have recently given birth. Maternity benefits are up to 15 weeks. To receive maternity benefits, proof of pregnancy is required by signing a statement declaring the expected/actual delivery date.

What are Parental Benefits? Parental benefits are available to the parents of a newborn or newly adopted child. There are 2 options: Standard and Extended. Once you start receiving parental benefits you cannot change options.

Standard Parental Benefits are for up to 40 weeks, but one parent cannot receive more than 35 weeks of standard benefits.

Extended Parental Benefits are for up to 69 weeks but one parent cannot receive more than 61 weeks of extended benefits.

Examples:

Chris and Alex are having a baby. Chris gives birth to the baby and takes the full 15 weeks of maternity benefits. Chris and Alex choose standard parental benefits and they each take 20 weeks at the same time to care for their child.

Chris and Alex are adopting a child. They choose to take extended parental benefits. Chris takes 39 weeks and Alex can take up to 30 weeks of extended parental benefits to care for their child.

How much can I expect to receive in EI benefits? For 2020, the maximum yearly insurable income is \$54,800. For maternity and standard parental benefits the basic rate of EI benefits is 55% of your average weekly income, the most a person is eligible to receive is \$573 weekly. For extended parental benefits the basic rate of EI benefits is 33% of your average weekly income, the most a person is eligible to receive is \$344 weekly.

What information is required for application? SIN #, mother's maiden name, mailing and residential address, direct deposit banking information and employment information from all employers over the previous 52 week period.

Online applications take ~ 60 minutes to complete and should be done as soon as possible after your last shift worked as applicants risk losing benefits if applying later than 4 weeks after your last day of work.

A Record of Employment (ROE) is required to complete the EI application. AHS automatically processes and sends the ROE to Service Canada once all worked and/or sick hours are paid. Casual employees MUST request their ROE from the Human Resources Benefits Department.

EI pay begins within 28 days following receipt of the application and all supporting documentation. The EI week begins on Sunday.

More information:
Online: www.servicecanada.gc.ca
Phone: 1-800-206-7218

Supplementary Unemployment Benefit (SUB)

Starting on your date of delivery you may be eligible for the SUB Plan supplement. The SUB plan is a wage “top up” offered during the valid health related period post delivery (~ 6-8 weeks).

The Valid Health-Related Period of your LOA is the period beginning on your date of delivery and continuing during your recovery from childbirth when you would be unable to perform the regular duties of your job.

Typically, the valid health related period post delivery is 6 weeks for a vaginal birth and 8 weeks for a C-Section. The SUB plan and valid health related period can be extended up to 17 weeks with medical evidence. In cases where the valid health related period extends longer than 17 weeks, employees revert back to receiving sick leave or short term/long term disability if no sick hours remain.

To receive payment from the SUB plan, an employee must be eligible for sick leave and/or STD. To be eligible for sick leave and/or STD you must be a regular full time, regular part-time or temporary employee. Casual employees do not qualify.

If you are receiving EI maternity benefits, the SUB Plan tops up your EI payment for the valid post delivery health related period.

If you do not qualify for the EI maternity benefits, the SUB top up plan will pay the equivalent of the EI maternity benefits and SUB top up for the valid post delivery health related period.

How much can I expect to receive in SUB top up? SUB plan top up is based on your regular rate of pay and regular scheduled hours per week. Top up will be to either 95% or 66.67% of your regular earnings.

To claim the SUB top up of 95%, you **MUST HAVE BANKED SICK TIME**. For an employee to receive 6 weeks of 95% SUB plan top up, they must have 6 weeks of banked sick time on the date of delivery. An employee to receive 8 weeks of 95% SUB plan top up, must have 8 weeks of banked sick time on the date of delivery.

Sick hours are required to be in your bank, but are not used while receiving SUB plan top up during the valid post delivery health period (6-8 weeks).

Once sick leave is exhausted, the SUB plan tops up to 66.67% of your regular weekly earnings.

Initiate SUB plan application ASAP following delivery. Have your physician complete their section of the application ~ 6 weeks post delivery.

To apply for the SUB Plan, submit the completed application a copy of your EI Maternity leave benefit payment information. Your EI benefit payment information is in your My Service Canada Account under the heading My Current Claim Information.

Completed SUB plan applications **MUST** be submitted within 6 months of the delivery date or will not be processed.

Send the completed SUB plan application to the Benefits Administration address listed on the application form.

SUB plan claims are processed after the valid health related period post delivery and are paid in one lump sum by direct deposit through AHS payroll.

If you are in receipt of the SUB top up, employee and employer LAPP contributions will continue. Contributions will be deducted from your SUB Plan benefits payment or will be collected when you return to work if your SUB plan top up does not cover the full amount.

What happens when a UNA member is weeks away from delivery but does not feel well enough to work?

In many of these instances, employers have advised UNA members to change their maternity LOA start date to the date they are no longer able to work due to pregnancy related health concerns. It is imperative to understand that UNA members are entitled to sick leave prior to delivery and should not change their maternity leave start date, but rather take sick leave. It is strongly encouraged and supported to begin your maternity LOA on the actual delivery date so you may benefit from having a full 12 - 18 months with your child.

To begin sick leave prior to the Maternity LOA/Delivery date, have a physician write you a sick note clearly explaining you are no longer able to work due to pregnancy related health concerns. Give the note to your manager or Abilities Management at which point you should be placed on

sick leave, being paid out of your sick bank until your delivery date and commencement of your Maternity LOA. If you do not have sufficient time in your sick bank you may need to transition to Short Term disability benefits and have your doctor complete forms from the Insurance Company.

Employers may attempt to have you work modified duties until your date of delivery and may question you about your abilities. Details regarding your health status and abilities should be between HR Ability Advisors, you and your physician; it is recommended not to engage in such conversations with your manager. Any UNA member who is not granted sick leave, feeling pressured to work modified duties when they feel unable or change their LOA start date, should contact their Local UNA office immediately.