

**Sam Houston State University**  
**A Member of The Texas State University System**

**Finance & Operations Human Resources Policy HR-04(d)**  
**Employee Leaves - Wellness and Development Leaves**

This is a subset of the HR04 Employee Leaves Policy describing wellness and development leave options. For a full description of all leave available to Sam Houston State University (University), please review all HR04 subsections.

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**1. Wellness Release Time for Voluntary Wellness Activities**

In accordance with Tex. Gov. Code Chapter 664, the University promotes wellness by providing work release without use of accrued leave to participate in wellness-related activities.

a. Eligible Employees. Regular full-time benefit eligible employees employed with the University a minimum of six (6) months and not currently approved for education or teaching release time are eligible to participate in the Wellness Program. Release time for wellness, education, and teaching are mutually exclusive and a supervisor may not approve leave for more than one of these activities.

b. Eligible Activities. Voluntary activities qualifying for release time are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elevate Healthy Campus Initiative Events</li><li>• Health Fitness Screenings/Assessments</li><li>• Stress Management Classes</li><li>• Smoking Cessation Classes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weight Loss Classes and Meetings</li><li>• Nutrition Classes</li><li>• Health Risk/Injury Reduction Classes</li><li>• Exercise Activities</li></ul>
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c. Period of Release. Employees approved for participation in the Wellness Program receive a maximum of two and one-half (2.5) hours of paid release time per week, taken in increments of no greater than one (1) hour per day for approved wellness activities with prior approval from the employees supervisor. Employee's released from duty for wellness activities may not be

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required to make up time.

d. Procedures.

- (1) Application. Employees must fill out the Sam Houston State University Employee Development Participation & Teaching Request Form. Participation requires annual enrollment, which expires at the end of each fiscal year.
- (2) Approval. Authority must be secured from the employee's supervisor and department head prior to participation in the Wellness Program. If the employee's supervision changes, the employee must request approval from the new supervisor and department head. Supervisors may not authorize Wellness Release when the employee is approved for education or teaching release. Further, supervisor shall make reasonable efforts to honor requests for participation in the Wellness Program but retain sole judgment and discretion whether granting a wellness request is in the best interests of the unit and department.

- e. An employee abusing release time may be subject to revocation of participation in Wellness release and disciplinary action.

**2. Time Off for Staff Council Participation**

The university encourages participation in [Staff Council](#). As such, employees elected to Staff Council positions are afforded up to three (3) hours per month to participate in council meetings and activities. In addition, departments are to allow time off for participants to attend the annual Staff Council banquet, food drive, breakfast, social, and professional development days.

**3. Educational Activity Leave**

An employee may use up to eight (8) hours of sick leave each calendar year to attend an educational activity for the employee's children who are in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. An educational activity is a school-sponsored activity including a parent-teacher conference, tutoring, a volunteer program, a field trip, a classroom program, a school committee, an academic competition, and an athletic, music, or theater program. Employees must give reasonable notice of intention to use sick leave to attend such activities. Part-time, regular, benefits eligible employees receive this leave on a proportional basis.

**4. Wellness Leave Award for Health Assessment and Exam**

In accordance with Tex. Gov. Code § 664.061, the University annually awards eight (8) hours of additional leave to eligible employees who complete the assessment and exam requirements detailed below.

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- a. Eligible Employees. Regular full-time benefit eligible employees employed with the University a minimum of six (6) months who have not received a wellness leave award within the previous twelve (12) months.
  
- b. Requirements.
  - (1) Health Risk Assessment (HRA) The employee completes the approved HRA and prints the completion certificate/e-mail. Links to approved BCBSTX HealthSelect HRA may be found on the ERS website. Employees not covered by HealthSelect Insurance may contact Human Resources for alternate HRA options. Employees may not share the HRA with Human Resources or the employee's supervisor.
  
  - (2) Physical Exam. Employee schedules a comprehensive physical exam and secures a copy of the medical provider's certification for the exam. During the examination, the employee provides the physician a copy of the HRA.
  
  - (3) The HRA completion certificate and medical provider's certification must be uploaded and routed to Human Resources for leave approval. Once verified by HR, the leave approval will be routed to Payroll for adding eight (8) hours of wellness leave to the employee's accrued leave.
  
- c. Wellness Leave. Upon employee completion of wellness requirements and approval, eight (8) hours of wellness leave shall be awarded for completion of wellness requirements every twelve (12) months. Wellness leave may be used with advance supervisor approval for any purpose during the twelve (12) months following the date of the award. When not used within twelve (12) months, wellness leave expires. Wellness leave is not eligible for payment to an employee upon separation from employment.

**5. Emergency and Administrative Leave for Outstanding Performance**

The President of Sam Houston State University may grant leave with pay to an employee for reasons not related to illness or injury or for good cause, upon the President's initiative or recommendation of the AVP of Human Resources or a Divisional Vice President. Illness-related absences are addressed in the Sick Leave and Sick Leave Pool provisions of this policy. Additionally, the President may grant an employee a reward for outstanding performance provided the exceptionally superior performance is properly documented. In no event shall the aggregate amount of administrative leave granted exceed thirty-two (32) hours in any fiscal year.

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**6. Mental Health Leave for Peace Officers**

- a. The purpose of this leave is to allow the use of mental health leave by licensed peace officers employed by the University who experience a traumatic event in the scope of employment.
- b. An officer shall be allowed up to 3 workdays (or 24 hours) of paid emergency leave for mental health when:
  - (1) the leave is
    - i. initiated by the officer;
    - ii. initiated by supervisory personnel; or
  - (2) ordered by a mental health professional  
is requested as a result of a traumatic event that occurred while on duty; and
  - (3) is approved by the Executive Director of Public Safety Services.
- c. The University will keep requests to take mental health leave and any medical information related to mental health leave confidential to the extent allowed by law and separate from the employee's general personnel file. The University cannot guarantee anonymity of information that is otherwise public or necessary to carry out the University's duties under the law.
- d. The University will not reduce an eligible employee's other paid leave balances for mental health leave taken under this policy.
- e. Officers who experience a traumatic event in the scope of employment are encouraged to contact the [Employee Assistance Program](#).
- f. Prior to returning to duty, the employee may be required to complete a fit for duty evaluation as determined by the Executive Director of Public Safety Services.

Reviewed by: Rhonda Beassie, Associate VP for Human Resources & Diversity 10/20/2021