



Fast Fact Friday

Medical Leave of Absence

Friday, February 21, 2025

Q1: “Is there anything in our Contract that protects us for extended time off if I don't have the hours to qualify for FMLA?”

Yes, Article 15.2 of our Contract affords us the ability to take a contractual Medical Leave of Absence for a minimum of 14 days.

Q2: “Do I need to be employed by Southwest Airlines for a minimum amount of time to qualify for a contractual Medical Leave of Absence?”

No. Unlike FMLA, there is no minimum amount of time you have to be employed by Southwest Airlines to qualify. However, if you are on probation and take a Medical Leave, your probationary period will be extended for the duration you were on Leave.

Q3: “What do I need to do in order to initiate a Medical Leave?”

You will need to submit a written request to Inflight Attendance and Leave requesting a Medical Leave and provide substantiating documentation from a qualified medical professional (physician, physician assistant (PA), nurse practitioner (NP), or clinical psychologist) Article 15.2. This request should be sent via your WNCO email address to: InflightAandL@wnco.com

Q4: “I have been struggling with my mental health and have discussed with my physician about taking some time off. Is a Medical Leave available for mental health issues?”

Absolutely! New language was added to Contract 2024 for a Flight Attendant to take time off for mental health reasons. In addition, a clinical psychologist was added to the list of qualified physicians who can sign medical leave paperwork.

Please remember that your mental health and its care are just as important as your physical well-being. If you are struggling with mental health issues, please remember that there are resources available to you.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): (214) 640-4380

Flight Attendant Drug & Alcohol Program (FADAP): (214) 640-4307 -or- (855) 333-2327

Clear Skies: (800) 742-8911

Suicide & Crisis Hotline: Call or Text 988

Fast Fact Friday

Medical Leave of Absence

Q5: "Can I get paid on a Medical Leave?"

Yes. If sick bank is available, a Flight Attendant has options for compensation when on a Medical Leave.

- Pairings which are on their board at the time of Medical Leave approval will be pulled and paid out the Flight Attendant's accrued sick bank.
- If unable to bid, Flight Attendants can utilize their sick bank up to 130 TFP per month while on a Medical Leave.
- Flight Attendants who have a scheduled vacation week during their Medical Leave are paid 34.0 TFP in the "A" position, or if they could have held a Primary Bid Line that paid more in the vacation week, they will be paid the greater of the two.

Q6: "Will I maintain my health insurance while on a Medical Leave?"

Per Article 15.6, health insurance benefits during a Medical Leave will continue for "a period of time equal to accrued unused sick leave (converted to days) plus accrued unused vacation plus one hundred twenty (120) days beginning the last day actively worked." Flight Attendants will receive a letter from SWA advising them of the date coverage will end.

Q7: "Do I lose seniority when I take an extended Medical Leave?"

Per Article 15.1, a Medical Leave of Absence because of illness or injury will not affect seniority or its accrual during the entire period of the Leave.

Q8: "I'm so close to getting that 5th week of vacation next year! Will going on a Medical Leave affect my vacation accrual?"

Per Article 15.12.B, during a Medical Leave, vacation days will continue to accrue for up to one year.

Q9: "If I'm released from a Medical Leave mid-quarter, will I be eligible for record improvement (Article 32.7)?"

No. To be eligible for our record improvement options, you must be on active status for the entire calendar quarter. A Medical Leave will make you inactive and disqualify you from that calendar quarter's record improvement.

Q10: "Can I use my pass privileges while on Medical Leave?"

Pass privileges (including Guest and Companion Passes) are SWA company-wide employee benefits. To find out information about these employee benefits, please review the Employee Travel Privilege Policies document on SWALife.

BONUS QUESTION: "I am confused about my personal Medical Leave options and don't feel comfortable asking Inflight Attendance & Leave. Is there anyone I can speak with at TWU Local 556?"

YES! TWU Local 556 has a Leave Specialist available to answer your questions and provide guidance.

Leavehelp@twu556.org