

**COLUMBIA COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

<b>APPROVED: July 21, 2009</b> <b>AMENDED: March 15, 2011</b> <b>June 21, 2011</b> <b>December 18, 2012</b> <b>September 21, 2021</b> <b>February 15, 2022</b>	<b>TOPIC: <i>Catastrophic Leave</i></b>
<i>Policy Number 236.1</i>	<b>POLICY SECTION: <i>Human Resources</i></b>

**I. PURPOSE**

To establish Catastrophic Leave and the terms of the accrual and use thereof for Regular Full-Time Employees and Regular Part-Time Employees.

**II. POLICY**

It is the policy to grant Catastrophic Leave with pay to eligible Regular Full-Time Employees and Regular Part-Time Employees in accordance with the policy guidelines. Probationary, temporary and seasonal workers are not eligible for Catastrophic Leave.

**III. GUIDELINES**

1) Accrual

Regular Full-Time Employees may accrue Catastrophic Leave up to a maximum of one thousand fifty-six (1,056) hours; a Regular Part-Time Employee equivalent is prorated.

2) Excess Leave

Employees who have excess Personal Time Off Leave at the end of each calendar year will have the excess leave placed in his or her personal Catastrophic Leave account at the beginning of each new calendar year, in accordance with the Personal Time Off Policy, *Policy Number 237.1*.

3) Usage

Employees may use his or her Catastrophic Leave for personal illness or injury, work-related injury, medical examinations or treatment, or to care for an Immediate or Extended Family member who is sick or injured. The Employee may begin using the Leave after the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) consecutive day of absence or forty (40) consecutive hours for a Full-Time Employee. A Part-Time employee equivalent is prorated. Employees with pre-approved or emergency medical leave requests who are expected to be out of work consecutively for more than forty (40) hours may be allowed to forego use of Personal Time Off first, subject to approval by the Human Resources Director.

4) Intermittent Usage

Intermittent usage of Catastrophic Leave may be approved to allow employees to obtain treatments that can only be given during working hours, i.e. chemotherapy, dialysis, radiation, etc. The Employee must be able to perform the essential functions of his or her position, must apply for and be approved for Family Medical Leave or Worker's Compensation, before he or she will be allowed to use Catastrophic Leave on an intermittent

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basis. Requests for intermittent usage and documentation supporting the request must be submitted to the employee’s immediate Supervisor, Department Head and Human Resources Director for review and approval. The information will be maintained in the employee confidential medical or Worker’s Compensation file.

5) Exclusions

Catastrophic Leave may not be used under the following conditions:

- a) Employment has been terminated either before or during such medical absence.
- b) The absence is due to illness or injury attributable to:
  - (1) Intentional self-inflicted injury
  - (2) Drug or alcohol addiction, unless seeking professional care
  - (3) Illness or injury incurred while committing a crime
  - (4) Illness or injury resulting from paid employment or self-employment other than employment by Columbia County that was not approved by the major Department Head, County Manager or Division Director.

**IV. LEAVE REQUEST**

1) Procedures

- a) Eligible Employees who use Catastrophic Leave shall submit medical status reports from the attending physician to his or her immediate supervisor during the course of the Employee medical recovery period. The report must be provided at a minimum every thirty (30) days and must provide a prognosis and tentative date of return to work.
- b) The employee must provide a return to work statement from the attending physician indicating he/she is able to perform the essential functions of his or her position without restrictions or limitations. The statement must be presented to the immediate Supervisor, Department Manager, and the Human Resources Department prior to his or her return to work after a personal illness or injury.
- c) No Catastrophic Leave will be granted to an eligible Employee in excess of the amount accrued and available to such employee.
- d) Accrued Catastrophic Leave and Personal Time Off leave of absence may be exhausted before an eligible Employee takes leave of absence without pay for medical reasons.
- e) The Employee may use Personal Time Off leave when his or her Catastrophic Leave has been exhausted.
- f) All Employee medical documentation will be maintained in a confidential medical file secured in the Human Resources Department.

2) Department Responsibility

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It is the responsibility of each Department Manager or designated Supervisor to ensure the provisions of this policy are observed. Corrective action should be taken in instances of suspected abuses or misinterpretation of the utilization of Catastrophic Leave. The Department Manager will ensure that use of Catastrophic Leave is recorded on the employee time sheet.

- 3) Leave Forfeiture  
Unused accrued Catastrophic Leave shall be forfeited upon termination of employment unless the employee qualifies for the Catastrophic Leave Incentive.

**V. CATASTROPHIC LEAVE INCENTIVE**

- 1) Eligibility Criteria  
Employees with twenty (20) years or more creditable County service, or Contract Employees with the required equivalency and creditable County service, who separate employment for non-disciplinary reasons and who provide adequate notice of the separation to his or her supervisor, will be eligible for the Catastrophic Leave Incentive. Employees who reach age sixty five (65) who have fifteen (15) years or more creditable county service will also be eligible for the Catastrophic Leave Incentive. Part-time employees with twenty (20) years or more creditable County service are eligible for the pro-rata equivalent of a full-time employee.
- 2) Catastrophic Leave Incentive  
Eligible Full-Time Employees as defined above will receive the following:
  - a) A payroll distribution of 50% of the Catastrophic Leave balance in a final pay check at the then current hourly rate of pay.  
A deposit of fifty percent (50%) of the then current hourly rate of pay of the Catastrophic Leave balance to an individual Retirement Health Savings (RHS) plan.
  - b) Eligible Part-time employees as defined above will receive a prorated equivalency of the above incentive criteria.

Compensation under the provisions of the policy is contingent upon the continued policy approval and continued availability of funds as approved by the Board of Commissioners.