**WELLNESS AND SICK LEAVE – OREGON SICK TIME**

All Estuary Partnership employees are eligible for paid wellness and sick leave benefits under this policy.

**Use of Paid Wellness Leave**

The Estuary Partnership’s wellness and sick leave policy encourages employees to focus on their health to prevent sickness as well as providing paid time off to care for themselves and their family members during times of illness.

The Estuary Partnership provides generous paid wellness and sick leave for employees to take the actions they need to stay healthy and well-prepared to engage fully when they are at work, as well as to take time off if they are not feeling well. Wellness leave is intended to provide employees with time before an illness or injury to maintain wellness and address issues related to burnout and the hybrid workplace, as well as to create an environment that normalizes caring for mental health. Employees remain encouraged to take time away from work duties when they are ill, whether that time is at the office or working from home. The traditional aspects of sick leave remain intact including time off to care for oneself or family members when there is an illness or injury.

Employees who are utilizing wellness leave time or sick time and are unable to report to work due to illness, injury, or personal emergency should follow the Estuary Partnership’s regular call-in procedures to notify their supervisor before the scheduled start of their workday, as far in advance as possible. If advance notice is not possible, the employee should provide notice as soon as possible or, under extreme circumstances, request another person to contact the Estuary Partnership. Except as otherwise approved, employees must call in on each additional day of absence. Except in the case of extenuating circumstances, failure to report absences in a timely manner may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

Unreported absences and abuse of wellness leave are damaging to performance and can result in disciplinary action, including termination, even if the employee still has available wellness leave time.

This policy should be construed to fully comply with the Oregon state-wide protected sick time (PST) law, ORS 653.601 – 653.661. An employee may use up to 40 hours of available wellness time in a year for any of the following purposes under the PST law, and such leave is treated as protected and is never considered in determining whether an employee’s attendance is satisfactory:

* For an employee’s mental or physical illness, injury, or health condition, need for medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition or need for preventive medical care;
* For care of a family member with a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition, care of a family member who needs medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition or care of a family member who needs preventive medical care;
* For any purpose covered under the Oregon Family Leave Act, including serious health condition of the employee, or covered family member; parental leave to bond with and care for a new child; leave to deal with the death of a family member; and sick child leave related to the illness, injury or condition of a child that is not a serious health condition but requires home care;
* For any leave related to seeking legal or law enforcement assistance or remedies to ensure the health and safety of the employee or the employee’s minor child or dependent, including preparing for and participating in protective order proceedings or other civil or criminal legal proceedings related to domestic violence, harassment, sexual assault or stalking; to seek medical treatment for or to recover from injuries caused by domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment or stalking of the employee or the employee’s minor child or dependent; to obtain, or to assist a minor child or dependent in obtaining, counseling from a licensed mental health professional related to an experience of domestic violence, harassment, sexual assault or stalking; to obtain services from a victim services provider for the employee or the employee’s minor child or dependent; or to relocate or take steps to secure an existing home to ensure the health and safety of the employee or the employee’s minor child or dependent;
* In the event of a public health emergency, including closure of the employee’s place of business, or the school or place of care of the employee’s child, by order of a public official due to a public health emergency; or a determination by a lawful public health authority or by a health care provider that the presence of the employee or the family member of the employee in the community would jeopardize the health of others, such that the employee must provide self-care or care for the family member; or the exclusion of the employee from the workplace under any law or rule that requires the employer to exclude the employee from the workplace for health reasons.
* In addition to the above, employees may utilize their wellness leave time for activities and actions that they may undertake to keep themselves from getting ill including but not limited to activities and actions that may require from 1 hour to no more than 3 consecutive days of approved wellness leave away from work assignments to care for their mental or physical health. These actions and activities may include a range of informal or formal activities that promote or improve physical and mental well-being. The specific use of the time does not need to be disclosed, but the time away should be approved by a supervisor consistent with the approval language above.

The Estuary Partnership may require medical verification for use of sick leave if the employee is out for more than three days prior to being allowed to return to work.

Wellness or sick leave may be used by employees in minimum increments of one hour. Except for employees on military leave or when unpaid days off are approved in advance by the Executive Director, employees must use accrued wellness leave to cover any absences from work for any of the above-listed reasons prior to using vacation or unpaid leave.

Wellness and sick leave are paid at the employee’s regular hourly rate, and any wellness and sick leave hours are not considered or treated as “hours worked” for purposes of determining the overtime pay entitlement for nonexempt employees in any workweek.

Accrued but unused paid wellness and sick leave is forfeited and not paid out upon separation from employment, nor will the Estuary Partnership “cash out” unused paid wellness leave at any time.

Employees who have questions about paid wellness or sick leave, or this policy should talk with the Finance & Operations Manager or the Executive Director.

The Estuary Partnership will not discipline any employee for absences due to paid wellness or sick leave or any protected leave, nor will it discriminate or retaliate against any employee for lawful exercise of their right to protected leave.