Employment Conditions of Extension Educator Conversion FAQ

Q: Why are the employment conditions being changed?

A: The employment conditions for Extension Educators have historically existed exclusively in the College of Agricultural Sciences, providing Educators with four weeks of paid time off and amount of sick time per absence based on years of service. This conversion will align the employment conditions of Extension Educators with University Policy HR34, Employment Conditions for Staff Employees.

Q: Where can I access a copy of policy HR34?

A: All University policies can be found at <https://policy.psu.edu/policies>. The unique URL for policy HR34 can be accessed at <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/hr34>.

Q: What is changing?

A: The two main changes pertain to vacation and sick time.   
  
Instead of four weeks of paid time off awarded each calendar year, Extension Educators will accrue vacation time each month. The previous four weeks of paid time off did not carry over from year to year and the cash value of any unused paid time off was not provided to departing Extension Educators. Vacation will be carried over from month to month and will continue to accrue, not to exceed the maximum. Additionally, an employee who terminates employment after completing at least one continuous year of employment or an employee who satisfactorily completes a fixed-term I appointment will receive the cash equivalent of unused accruals (not to exceed the maximum provided by policy).  
  
Employees who were hired prior to October 1, 1992, will continue to receive an allowance of sick time per absence depending on years of service. The University refers to this as the “former sick leave plan,” which can be accessed at <https://policy.psu.edu/paid-sick-leave-exempt-staff-who-began-exempt-employment-prior-october-1-1992>. An employee who retires on a pension and who is eligible for continuation of insurance into retirement, per policy HR54 (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/hr54>), shall receive one-fourth of the cash value of the employee's unused sick leave; provided, however, such payment shall not exceed an amount equal to a) 12-1/2 days of pay or b) 17 days of pay if the employee's use in the preceding 12 months has not exceeded 25 percent of the paid sick leave allowance.

Q: What does the retirement payout under the former sick leave plan actually mean?

A: Essentially, if the employee used less than 30 days of sick time in the year leading up to retirement, they will receive the cash value of 17 days of sick time. If more than 17 days of sick time was used, they will receive the cash value of 12-1/2 days.

Employees who were hired after October 1, 1992, will begin accruing 8 hours of sick time per month. An employee who meets the eligibility criteria to leave the University as a retiree under policy HR54 (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/hr54>) is eligible to receive one-fourth of the cash value of the employee's unused sick leave; provided, however, such payment will not exceed an amount equal to a) 100 hours of pay, or b) 136 hours of pay if the employee's accrued sick leave balance is at least three-quarters of all sick leave accrued.

Q: What does the retirement sick time payout under policy HR34 actually mean?

A: Essentially, the employee will receive the cash value of one-fourth of their sick time balance up to 136 hours if the employee has a sick balance at least equal to three-quarters of the total sick time accrued during their employment. For example, an employee has 25 years of service and 2,000 hours of sick time at the time of retirement. The total sick time accrued during employment is 2,400 hours. The employee would need to have at least 1,800 hours of sick time to receive one-fourth of this, up to 136 hours.   
  
Alternatively, the employee will receive the cash value of one-fourth of their sick time balance up to 100 hours if the employee has a sick balance less than three-quarters of the total sick time accrued during their employees. For example, an employee has 25 years of service and a sick time balance of 900 hours at the date of retirement, the employee will receive one-fourth, up to 100 hours.

Q: When am I eligible to retire from Penn State with benefits?

A: Criteria to retire is outlined in policy HR54, Continuation of Group Insurance after Age 60, Age 65, and after Retirement or Death (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/hr54>).   
  
Full-Time Employees Hired Before January 1, 2010, to Continue Medical Coverage:

You may continue to be covered under the health plan benefits available to retired employees and their eligible dependents if, at retirement, you meet one of the following conditions:

* You are at least 60 years of age.
* You have at least 15 years of regular, continuous full-time employment.
* You have participated in a University-sponsored medical plan for 15 continuous years immediately preceding retirement.

-OR-

* You have 25 years of regular full-time employment.
* You have 10 years of continuous participation in a University-sponsored health care plan immediately preceding retirement.

Full-Time Employees Hired on or After January 1, 2010, to Access a Retirement Healthcare Savings Plan:

* Completed 25 years of continuous full-time service and are age 60 or older.

-OR-

* Completed a minimum of 15 years of continuous full-time service and are age 65 or older.

Q: Will other practices for Extension Educators change?

A: This change in employment conditions for Extension Educators is not intended to change other things. For example, Extension Educators will still go through the promotion process. Additionally, County Extension offices will still follow the various county holiday schedules.

Q: What if I have already requested time off in January? \*\*Amended 12.19.2018

A: All Extension Educators are being provided a beginning balance of 40 hours of vacation ~~and for those Extension Educators hired after 10.01.1992, 48 hours of sick time per full year of service.~~ Extension Educators hired after 10.01.1992 with less than 20 years of service will be provided a beginning balance of sick time equivalent to what they would have had under the former sick leave plan. Extension Educators hired after 10.01.1992 and have more than 20 years of service will be provided 48 hours of sick time per full year of service. Reference the chart below to determine your beginning sick balance as of 01.01.2019. Extension Educators originally received a personal email and letter providing clarification on their sick plan and the corresponding beginning balance. An amended email was sent on 12.19.2018.  
  
Amended Sick Conversion

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| Length of Continuous Regular University Service | Beginning Sick Balance 01.01.2019 |
| Less than 2 years | 160 hours (20 days) |
| More than 2, less than 5 years | 320 hours (40 days) |
| More than 5, but less than 10 years | 480 hours (60 days) |
| More than 10, but less than 20 years | 960 hours (120 days) |
| More than 20, but less than 26 years | 48 hours per full year of service (ranges 960 – 1248) |
| More than 26 years (hired before 10.01.1992) | Former sick leave plan |

Q: What if I do not have enough paid time off to cover a previous request?

A: If the provided beginning balances are not enough to cover previously requested and approved time off, please reach out to your manager or Ag HR to discuss further.